

Lit
204

PLANTATION
EDITION



VOLUME IX



"Thank you. I am glad if he meets with your approval."

(PAGE 33)

✧ THE NOVELS, STORIES,
SKETCHES AND POEMS OF
THOMAS NELSON PAGE ✧

BRED IN THE BONE

CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS
NEW YORK, ✧ ✧ ✧ ✧ 1908

Copyright, 1891, 1904, 1906, by
CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS

All Rights Reserved



TO
MY MOTHER

PREFACE.

THE title of this volume of Southern stories has been chosen not so much because of the first story as because all the stories are founded on traits of character which have appeared to the author to be bred in the bone.

T. N. P.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
BRED IN THE BONE	3
THE SPECTRE IN THE CART	57
THE SHERIFF'S BLUFF	97
THE LONG HILLSIDE	133
OLD JABE'S MARITAL EXPERIMENTS	157
THE CHRISTMAS PEACE	171
MAM' LYDDY'S RECOGNITION	219
ELSKET*	255
A SOLDIER OF THE EMPIRE*	307

*In this volume are included "Elsket" and "A Soldier of the Empire," heretofore published in the volume entitled "Elsket and Other Stories."

ILLUSTRATIONS

From Drawings by Harrison Fisher, F. C. Ransom and A. B. Frost.

"THANK YOU. I AM GLAD IF HE MEETS YOUR APPROVAL"	Frontispiece
	FACING PAGE
DREW UP ALONG THE PATH FROM THE TAVERN TO BOW TO HIM	100
"I DON' KEER NOTHIN' 'BOUT DE TEMPER"	164

BRED IN THE BONE

BRED IN THE BONE

I

IT was the afternoon before the closing day of the spring meeting of the old Jockey Club that so many people know. The next day was to be the greatest ever known on that course; the Spring Meeting was to go out in a blaze of glory. As to this everybody in sight this spring afternoon was agreed; and the motley crowd that a little before sunset stood clustered within the big white-painted gate of the grounds about the Jockey Club race-stables rarely agreed as to anything. From the existence of the Deity to the effect of a blister on a windgall, through the whole range of stable-thought and horse-talk, there was no subject, speaking generally, on which that mongrel population agreed, except, of course, on one thing—the universal desirability of whiskey. On this one subject they all agreed, always

BRED IN THE BONE

Yet they were now all of one mind on the fact that the next day was to be the record on that course. In the first place, the prize in the great over-night event, the steeplechase set for the morrow, was the biggest ever offered by the club, and the "cracks" drawn together for the occasion were the best ever collected at a meeting on that course.

Even such noted steeplechasers as Mr. Galloper's Swallow, Colonel Snowden's Hurricane, and Tim Rickett's Carrier Pigeon, which had international reputations, were on hand for it, and had been sent "over the sticks" every morning for a week in hopes of carrying off such a prize.

There was, however, one other reason for the unwonted unanimity. Old Man Robin—"Colonel-Theodoric-Johnston's-Robin-suh"—said it was to be the biggest day that was ever seen on that track, and in the memory of the oldest stable-boss old Robin had never admitted that any race of the present could be as great, "within a thousand miles," as the races he used to attend "befo' de wah, when hosses ran all de way from Philidelphy to New Orleans." Evil-minded stable-men and boys who had no minds—only evil—laid snares and trapfalls for

BRED IN THE BONE

“Colonel Theodoric Johnston’s Robin, of Bullfield, suh,” as he loved to style himself, to trip him and inveigle him into admissions that something was as good now as before the war; but they had never succeeded. The gang had followed him to the gate, where he had been going off and on all the afternoon, and were at their mischief now while he was looking somewhat anxiously out up the parched and yellow dusty road.

“Well, I guess freedom ’s better ’n befo’ d’ wah?” hazarded one of his tormentors, a hatchet-faced, yellow stable-boy with a loud, sharp voice. He burst into a strident guffaw.

“Maybe, you does,” growled Robin. He edged off, rubbing his ear. “Befo’ de wah you ’d be mindin’ hawgs—what you ought to be doin’ now, stidder losin’ races an’ spilin’ somebody’s hosses, mekin’ out you kin ride.” A shout of approving derision greeted this retort.

Old Robin was a man of note on that circuit. It was the canon of that crowd to boast one’s self better than everyone else in everything, but Robin was allowed to be second only to the speaker and the superior of everyone else with a unanimity which had its precedent only after Salamis.

BRED IN THE BONE

Robin had been head of Colonel Theodorick Johnston's stable before the war, the time on which his mind dwelt with tender memory; and this, with the consideration with which he was treated by stable-owners and racing-gentlemen who shone like luminaries on the far edge of the stable-boys' horizon, and the old man's undoubted knowledge of a horse, made him an authority in that world.

The Bullfield stable had produced some of the greatest horses of the country—horses to which the most ignorant stable-biped knew the great winners of the present traced back their descent or were close akin—and if Colonel Johnston's stable lost anything of prestige, it was not in Robin's telling of it. He was at it now as he stood at the big white gate, gazing up the road, over which hung a haze of dust. Deucalion, Old Nina, Planet, Fanny Washington, and the whole gleaming array of fliers went by in Robin's illumined speech, mixed up with Revenue, Boston, Timoleon, Sir Archy and a dozen others in a blaze of equine splendor.

"Aw, what 're you giffin us?" jeered a dusky young mulatto, clad in a ragged striped sweater, recently discharged as a stable-boy. "What wus the time then? Why 'n't you read the book?"

BRED IN THE BONE

This was a dig at Robin, for he was "no great hand at reading," and the crowd knew it and laughed. The old man turned on the speaker.

"Races now ain't no mo' than quarter-dashes. Let 'em try 'em in fo'-mile heats if they want to see what 's in a hoss. Dat 's the test o' wind an' bottom. *Our* hosses used to run fo'-mile heats from New York to New Orleans, an' come in with their heads up high enough to look over dis gate."

"Why 'n't you read the books?" persisted the other, facing him.

"I can't read not much better than you *ken ride*," retorted Robin. This was a crusher in that company, where riding stood high above any literary attainment; for the other had been a failure as a jockey.

He tried to rally.

"I 'll bet you a hundred dollars I can——"

Robin gazed at him witheringly.

"You ain' got a hunderd dollars; you ain't got a hunderd cents! You would n't 'a' been wuth a hunderd dollars in slave-times, an' I know you ain' wuth it now."

The old man, with a final observation that he did n't want to have to go to court as a witness when folks were taken up for stealing their

BRED IN THE BONE

master's money, took out and consulted his big gold stop-watch. That was his conclusive and clinching argument. It was surprising what an influence that watch exercised. Everyone who knew Robin knew that watch had been given him before the war as a testimonial by the stewards of the Jockey Club. It had the indisputable record engraved on the case, and had been held over the greatest race-horses of the country. Robin could go up to the front door of the club and ask for the president—he possessed this exclusive privilege—and be received with an open hand and a smile, and dismissed with a jest. Had not Major McDowell met him, and introduced him to a duke as one of his oldest friends on the turf, and one who could give the duke more interesting information about the horses of the past than any other man he knew? Did not Colonel Clark always shake hands with him when they met, and compare watches? So now, when, as the throng of horse-boys and stable-attendants stood about him, Robin drew his watch and consulted it, it concluded his argument and left him the victor.

The old trainer himself, however, was somewhat disturbed, and once more he gazed up the road anxiously. The ground on which he had

BRED IN THE BONE

predicted the greatness of the next day was not that the noted horses already present were entered for the race, but much more because he had received a letter from one whom he sometimes spoke of as "one of his children," and sometimes as "one of his young masters"—a grandson of his old master, Colonel Theodorick Johnston of Bullfield—telling him that he was going to bring one of his horses, a colt his grandfather had given him, and try for the big steeplechase stake.

Old Robin had arranged the whole matter for him, and was now awaiting him, for he had written that he could not get there until late in the day before the race, as he had to travel by road from the old place.

Though old Robin let no one know of his uneasiness, he was watching now with great anxiety, for the sun was sinking down the western sky toward the green bank of trees beyond the turn into the home stretch, and in an hour more the entries would be closed.

While he waited he beguiled the time with stories about his old master's stable, and about the equine "stars" that shone in the pedigree of this horse.

Colonel Johnston's fortune had gone down

BRED IN THE BONE

with the close of the war, and when his stable was broken up he had recommended his old trainer to one of his friends and had placed him with a more fortunate employer.

Robin had not seen his old master's grandson for years—not since he was a little boy, when Robin had left home—and he pictured him as a dashing and handsome young gentleman, such as he remembered his father before him. As to the horse, not Sir Archy himself had been greater. Robin talked as though he had had the handling of him ever since he was dropped; and he ran over a pedigree that made the boys about him open their wicked eyes.

Just then a stable-boy discerned out on the highway across the field a rider, coming along at a swinging trot that raised the dust and shot it in spurts before him

“Yonder he come now!” cried the urchin, with a grimace to attract the attention of the crowd. They looked in the direction indicated, and then in chorus began to shout. Old Robin turned and glanced indifferently down the road. The next instant he wheeled and his black hand made a clutch at the boy, who dodged behind half a dozen others as a shout of derisive

BRED IN THE BONE

laughter went up from the throng. What Robin saw was only a country lad jogging along on a big raw-boned, blazed-faced horse, whose hipbones could be seen even at that distance.

“You know dat ain’t my horse!” said the old man, sharply. “You young boys is gittin’ too free with you’ moufs! Dat horse——”

The rest of his speech, however, was lost; for at that moment the horseman turned from the highway into the road to the race-course and came swinging on toward the gate. The gang behind old Robin broke into renewed jeers, but at the same time kept well out of his reach; for the old man’s face bore a look that no one dared trifle with, and he had a heavy hand on occasion, as many of them had come to know. His eyes now were fastened on the horse that was rapidly approaching through a cloud of dust on the yellow road, and a look of wonder was growing on his brown face.

The rider pulled rein and drew up just outside the open gate, looking down on the group there in some bewilderment. Then his eyes lighted up, as the old trainer stepped out and, taking off his hat, put forth his hand.

“Uncle Robin?”

BRED IN THE BONE

“My young master.” He took the bridle just as he might have done years before had his old master ridden up to the gate.

The act impressed the gang behind him as few things could have done, and though they nudged one another, they fell back and huddled together rather farther away, and only whispered their ridicule among themselves.

The boy sprang from the saddle, and the old man took possession of the horse.

They were a strange-looking pair, horse and rider, fresh from the country, both of them dusty and travel-stained, and, as the stable-boys whispered among themselves, both “starving for the curry-comb.”

The lad passed in at the gate, whipping the dust from his clothes with the switch he carried.

“Good-evening, boys.”

Robin glared back fiercely to see that no insolent response was made, but there was no danger. The voice and manner were such that many a hand jerked up to a cap. Besides, the young lad, though his clothes were old and travel-stained, and his hair was long and was powdered with dust, showed a clean-cut face, a straight back, broad shoulders, and muscular

BRED IN THE BONE

legs, as he strode by with a swing which many a stable-boy remarked.

Robin led the horse away around the end of the nearest stable. No one would have known his feelings, for he kept a severe countenance, and broke out on the nearest stable-boy with fierce invective for not getting out of his way.

The horse carried his head high, and, with pointed ears, wide eyes, and dilated nostrils, inspected everything on either side.

It was only when the new-comer and Robin were out of hearing that the jeers broke out aloud, and even then several of the on-lookers, noting the breeding along with the powerful muscles and flat bone, asserted that it was "a good horse, all the same." They had eyes for a good horse.

II

As the old trainer led the horse away around the long stables, the low rumble of far-off thunder grumbled along the western horizon.

BRED IN THE BONE

Robin glanced in that direction. It might mean a change in the chances of every horse that was to run next day. The old man looked downcast; the boy's countenance cleared up. He scanned the sky long and earnestly where a dull cloud was stretching across the west; then he followed the horse among the long lines of low buildings with a quickened step.

It was not till they had reached a box-stall in an old building far off in one corner of the grounds that the old negro stopped. When he had been expecting another horse—the horse of which he had boasted to his entire acquaintance—he had engaged in advance a box in one of the big, new stables, where the descendant of the kings would be in royal and fitting company. He could not bring himself now to face, with this raw-boned, sunburnt colt, the derisive scrutiny of the men who had heard him bragging for a week of what his young master would show them when he came. Yet it was more on his young master's account than on his own that he now slunk away to this far-off corner. He remembered his old master, the king of the turf, the model of a fine gentleman, the leader of men; whose graciousness and princely hospitality were in all mouths; whose

BRED IN THE BONE

word was law; whose name no one mentioned but with respect.

He remembered his young master as he rode away to the war on one of the thoroughbreds, a matchless rider on a matchless horse. How could he now allow their grandson and son, in this rusty suit, with this rusty colt at which the stable-boys jeered, to match himself against the finest men and horses in the country? He must keep him from entering the horse.

But as the old fellow stopped before the stall and glanced at the horse he had been leading, his face changed. It took on the first look of interest it had worn since the horse had appeared on the road in a cloud of dust. He was standing now directly in front of him. His eyes opened. The deep chest, the straight, clean legs with muscles standing out on the forearms in big knots, the fine head with its broad, full brow, its wide eyes full of life and intelligence, the delicate muzzle, suddenly caught his eye. He took a step to one side, and scanned the horse from top to hoof, and his face lighted up. Another step, and he ran his hand over him, up and down, from topknot to fetlock, from crest to croup. At every touch his eyes opened wider.

BRED IN THE BONE

“Umhm! He hard as a rock!” He was talking aloud, but to himself. “He ’s got de barrel to stay, an’ he leg jes as clean as a pin!”

It was the first word of praise he had vouchsafed. The young owner’s face lighted up. He had felt the old man’s disappointment, and his heart had been sinking. It was lifted now.

“What you say he pedigree?”

“Imported Leam——”

“I know. Dat ’s de blood! Imported Leamington—Fanny Wash’n’ by Revenue! He ’ll do. Hit ’s bred in de bone!”

“Did you ever see such bone?” the boy asked, running his hand over the big knee-joint.

The old trainer made no answer. He glanced furtively around to see that no one heard the question. Then he went on feeling the horse, inch by inch. Every muscle and sinew he ran his hand over, and each moment his face cleared up more and more. “He ain’ nothin’ but rock!” he said, straightening up. “Walk him off dyah, son”—with a wave of his hand—“*walk him.*”

It was as if he were speaking to a stable-boy. He had now forgotten all but the horse, but the young man understood.

BRED IN THE BONE

He took the bridle, but the horse did not wait. At the first step he was up with him, with a long, swinging stride as springy as if he were made of rubber, keeping his muzzle close to his master's shoulder, and never tightening his rein. Now and then he threw up his head and gazed far over beyond the whitewashed fence toward a horse galloping away off on the curving track, as if there were where his interest lay.

"Straight as a plank," muttered the old trainer, with a toss of his head. "'Minds me o' Planet. Got de quarters on him.—Bring him back!" he called.

As the young man returned, the older one asked, "Can he run?"

"Run! Want to see him move?"

Without waiting for an answer, he vaulted into the saddle and began to gather up the reins. The horse lifted his head and gathered himself together, but he did not move from his tracks.

"Wait. How far is you come to-day?" demanded Robin.

"About forty miles. I took it easy." He turned the horse's head.

The old man gave an exclamation, part oath, part entreaty, and grabbed for the reins just as the boy was turning toward the track, where a

BRED IN THE BONE

whitewashed board fence stood over four feet high.

"Wait—whar you gwine? Forty mile! Whar you gwine? Wait!"

"Over into the track. That fence is nothing."

He settled himself in the saddle, and the horse threw up his head and drew himself together. But old Robin was too quick for him. He clutched the rider by the leg with one hand at the same time that he seized the bridle with the other.

"Git off him; git off him!" Without letting go the bridle, he half lifted the boy from the saddle.

"That won't hurt him, Uncle Robin. He 's used to it. That fence is nothing."

"Gi' me dis hoss dis minute. Forty mile, an' 'spec' to run to-morrow! Gi' me dis hoss dis minute, boy."

The young owner yielded with a laugh, and the old trainer took possession of the horse, and led him on, stopping every now and then to run his hand over his sinewy neck and forelegs, and grumbling to himself over the rashness of youth.

"Jes like he pa," he muttered. "Never

BRED IN THE BONE

could teach him to tek keer o' a hoss. Think all a hoss got to do is to run! Forty mile, an' want to put him at a five-foot fence when he cold as a wedge!"

When he was inside the stable his manner changed. His coat was off in an instant, and no stable-boy could have been more active. He set about grooming the horse with the enthusiasm of a boy, and the horse after the first inquisitive investigation of his new attendant, made with eye and nose, gave himself up to his care. The young owner did the same, only watching him closely to learn the art of grooming from a past-master of the craft.

It was the first time in years that Robin had played hostler; and it was the first time in his life that that horse had ever had such a grooming. Every art known to the professor of the science was applied. Every muscle was rubbed, every sinew was soothed. And from time to time, as at touch of the iron muscles and steel sinews the old fellow's ardor increased, he would straighten up and give a loud puff of satisfaction.

"Umph! Ef I jist had about a week wid him, I 'd show 'em som'n'!" he declared. "Imported Leam——"

BRED IN THE BONE

“He don’t need any time. He can beat anything in this country,” asserted the owner from his perch on a horse-bucket.

“You ain’ see ’em all,” said Robin, dryly, as he bent once more to his work. “An’ it ’s goin’ to rain, too,” he added, as the rumble of thunder came up louder from the westward.

“That ’s what I am hoping for,” said the other. “He ’s used to mud. I have ridden him in it after cattle many a day. He can out-gallop any horse in the State in mud.”

Robin looked at the young man keenly. He showed more shrewdness than he had given him credit for.

“Kin he jump in mud?” he demanded.

“He can jump in anything. He can fly. If you just had let me take him over those fences——” Robin changed the subject:

“What ’s his name? I got to go an’ enter him.”

The boy told him. The old man’s countenance changed, but the other did not see it. He was busy getting a roll of bills—by no means a large one—from his pocket.

“How much is it? I have the money all right.” He proudly unrolled the money, mostly dollar bills. The old negro took the roll and counted the money slowly.

BRED IN THE BONE

“Is dis—?” he began, but stopped. After a minute’s thought he went over them again.

“Heah.” He took out about half the money, and handed the rest back. “Wait. I ’ll tend to it.” He reached for his coat. “Don’t you do nuttin’ to him while I ’m gone, an’ don’t you lef’ him, not a minute.” He put on his coat and went out.

His path led out from among the stables to the wing of one of the buildings where the superintendent and his staff had their offices. Here a colloquy took place between Robin and the cigar-smoking, dark-skinned clerk in charge, and then Robin left and paid a visit to another kind of official—an official on the main road, just outside the grounds, who kept an establishment which was divided into two departments. One was dignified by the word “Café” painted in black letters on the white ground of the painted pane, though on the door was the simple American word “Bar.” Over the door of the other was an attempt to portray three gilded balls. The proprietor of this bifurcated establishment, a man with red hair, a low forehead, a broad chin, and brawny shoulders, a long lip and long arms, rejoiced in the name of Nicholas Crimins, though by most of his customers he was irreverently called by a dimin-

BRED IN THE BONE

utive of that name. The principal part of his business undoubtedly came from the side of the establishment with the short name; but it was known to the stable-fraternity that on occasion "Old Nick" would make an advance to a needy borrower who was "down on his luck" of at least fifteen per cent. of almost any article's value. Saddles, bridles, watches, pistols, scarfpins, and all the indiscriminate belongings of a race-track population were to be found in his "store." And it was said that he had even been known to take over a stable when the owner found it necessary to leave the State on exceptionally short notice.

Into this odorous establishment old Robin now went and had a brief interview with the proprietor, whose surprise at the old trainer's proposition was unfeigned. As he knew Robin was not a gambler, the money-lender could set down his request to only one of two causes: either he had lost on a race that day, or he had "points" which made him willing to put up all he could raise on a horse next day. He tried him on the first.

"Had bad luck to-day? I lost a pile myself," he began insinuatingly. "Thim scoundrels 'll bate ivery horse they say a man look at. It 's a regular syn-dicate."

BRED IN THE BONE

“Nor, I did n’t lay a dollar on a hoss to-day,” declared Robin. He looked wise.

It was not that, reflected Mr. Crimins. Then it must be the other. Robin’s look decided him.

“Any news?” he asked confidentially, leaning forward and dropping his husky voice. This meant, generally, had he heard of anything likely to change the chances of next day’s race.

“Ur—who ’s goin’ to win the steep?”

Robin looked wiser.

“Well—the’ may be some surprises to-morrow. You keep your eyes open. Dese heah Yankee hosses don’ always have dey own way——”

“I try to, but thim sheenies! Tell me what you know?” His voice was a cajoling whisper now. “They says Hurricane’s—or is it Swallow’s—?” He was looking with exaggerated interest at something in his hand, waiting in hopes that Robin would take up the sentence and complete it.

Robin chuckled, and the chuckle was worth what he wanted.

“Swallow ’s too fat; Hurricane ’s good, but it ’s muscle an’ wind an’ de blood what tells in de last mile—blood an’ bottom.

BRED IN THE BONE

You keep yer eye on a dark hoss. Gi' me meh money."

The loan-broker still held on to the notes, partly from force of habit, while he asked: "Who 's a-ridin' him?"

But Robin reached for the bills and got them.

"Somebody as knows how to ride," he said, oracularly. "You 'll see to-morrow."

As he turned away the lender muttered an oath of disappointment. The next moment he examined something curiously. Then he put it to his ear, and then in his pocket with a look of deep satisfaction.

"Well, I 'll make this anyhow."

When Robin came out of the shop, for the first time in twenty years he was without his big gold watch. He passed back by the secretary's office, and paid down the sum necessary to enter a horse in the next day's steeplechase. The clerk looked toward the door.

"Don't you know the sun is down?"

"De sun down! 'Tain't nothin' but de cloud. De sun 's a quarter of a hour high." Robin walked to the door.

"What time is it by your watch?"

"Hit 's edzactly seven—" His back was to the official.

BRED IN THE BONE

“Humph!” grunted the clerk. “Don’t you know——”

“—lackin’ six——”

“—the sun sets at ten minutes to seven?”

“—lackin’ sixteen minutes forty-two seconds and a quarter,” pursued Robin, with head bent as if he were looking at a watch.

“Oh, you be hanged! Your old watch is always slow.”

“My watch? Dis heah watch?” He turned, buttoning his coat carefully. “You know whar dis watch come f’om?” He pressed his hand to his side and held it there.

“Yes, I know. Give me your money. It will help swell Carrier Pigeon’s pile to-morrow.”

“Not unless he can fly,” said Robin.

“What ’s his name?” The clerk had picked up his pen.

Robin scratched his head in perplexity.

“Le’ me see. I ’mos’ forgit. Oh, yes.” He gave the name.

“What! Call him ‘J. D.’?”

“Yes, dat ’ll do.”

So, the horse was entered as “J. D.”

As Robin stepped out of the door the first big drops of rain were just spattering down on the steps from the dark cloud that now covered

BRED IN THE BONE

all the western sky, and before he reached the stable it was pouring.

As he entered the stall the young owner was on his knees in a corner, and before him was an open portmanteau from which he was taking something that made the old man's eyes glisten: an old jacket of faded orange-yellow silk, and a blue cap—the old Bullfield colors, that had once been known on every course in the country, and had often led the field.

Robin gave an exclamation.

“Le’ me see dat thing!” He seized the jacket and held it up.

“Lord, Lord! I ’s glad to see it,” he said. “I ain’ see it for so long. It ’s like home. Whar did you git dis thing, son? I ’d jest like to see it once mo’ come home leadin’ de field.”

“Well, you shall see it doing that to-morrow,” said the young fellow, boastfully, his face alight with pleasure.

“I declar’ I ’d gi’ my watch to see it.”

He stopped short as his hand went to his side where the big gold timepiece had so long reposed, and he took it away with a sudden sense of loss. This, however, was but for a second. In a moment the old trainer was back in the past, telling his young master of the glories of

BRED IN THE BONE

the old stable—what races it had run and what stakes it had won.

The storm passed during the night, and the sun rose next morning clear and bright. One horse, at least, that was entered for the big race was well cared for. Robin had slept in his stall, and his young master had had his room. They had become great friends, and the young man had told the old trainer of his hopes. If he won he would have enough to send his sister off to school in the city, and he would go to college. Robin had entered into it heart and soul, and had given the boy all the advice he could hold.

Robin was up by light, looking after the horse; and the young owner, after waiting long enough to take another lesson in the proper handling of a horse about to run, excused himself, and, leaving the horse with the old trainer, went out, he said, “to exercise for his wind.” This was a long walk; but the young rider’s walk took him now, not along the track or the road, but along the steeplechase course, marked by the hurdles; and though the ground was wet and soggy on the flat, and in some places the water still stood, he appeared not to mind it in the least. So far from avoiding the pools,

BRED IN THE BONE

he plunged straight through them, walking backward and forward, testing the ground, and at every "jump" he made a particular examination.

When he returned to the stable he was as wet as a "drowned rat," but he looked well satisfied, and the old trainer, after he had talked with him a few minutes, was satisfied also.

"Dat boy 's he gran'pa's gran'chile," he muttered, well pleased with his account.

III

THE crowd that assembled at the course that afternoon was enough to fill the hearts of the management with joy, if a management has hearts. When the first race was called, the stands and paddocks were already filled, and the road was crowded with vehicles as far as the eye could see. The club and club-paddock filled later, as is the way with fashionable folk; but when the second race was called, these, too, were packed, and they looked, with the gay dresses of the throng that filled every foot of space, like great banks of flowers, while the

BRED IN THE BONE

noise that floated out sounded like the hum of a vast swarm of bees.

The great race of the day was the fourth on the programme, and all minds were fastened on it, the interest in the other races being merely perfunctory.

Before the big event the paddock was thronged with those who came to see the horses. A curious crowd they were—stout men, heavy-jawed and coarse-lipped; thin men, sharp-eyed and fox-faced; small, keen men, evil-looking boys, and round-faced, jovial-looking fellows—all stamped with *horse*. Among these mingled refined-looking gentlemen and fashionably dressed ladies.

Even under their blankets the horses were a fine-looking lot.

Among the crowd was a group of which the center was a young and very pretty girl. A simple white gown became her youth and freshness, and a large white hat with a long white ostrich-feather curled over the brim, shading her piquant face, added to her charm. A few pink roses fastened in her dress were the only color about her, except the roses in her cheeks. Most of those with her were men considerably older

BRED IN THE BONE

than herself. They appeared, rather, friends of her father, Colonel Ashland, a distinguished-looking gentleman, known to turfmen as the owner of one of the best stock-farms in the country. He loved horses, but never talked of them. The young lady had just left school, and had never seen a steeplechase before, and her eagerness kept her companions in continual merriment. They were bantering her to bet, which she had as yet refused to do. All were deeply interested in the race. Indeed, two of the gentlemen with Colonel Ashland, Colonel Snowden and Mr. Galloper, had horses entered in the steeplechase; and as they examined the horses and made observations on them apt as a proverb, many of the bystanders strained their ears to catch their words, in hopes of getting a few last points on which to lay their bets.

Hurricane, a medium-sized bay, was next to the favorite; but Swallow, a big-boned sorrel, was on his form going up in the betting, and Mr. Galloper was in fine spirits. He was bantering his friend for odds that his big chestnut with the cherry colors would not beat the favorite.

Presently in the round came, led by an elderly negro, whose face wore a look portentous of

BRED IN THE BONE

mystery, a big horse covered with a sheet. A set of clean legs appeared below the sheet, and the head set on the long, muscular neck was fine enough for a model.

"What horse is that?" asked one of the gentlemen. It was the same question that many were asking as the horse walked with a long, easy swing, as quiet, yet as much at home, as if he were in his own stable-yard.

"Hello! that must be the new entry—'J. D.,'" said Colonel Snowden, pushing forward to get a good look at him.

"Whose horse is this, Robin?" enquired Colonel Ashland.

The old fellow touched his hat.

"Dis is Mr. Johnston's hoss, suh." He spoke with pride.

"Not a very distinguished name," laughed one of the others, Mr. Newby, a youngish man dressed in the latest race-course style. He wore bits and stirrups as pins and fobs, owned a few horses, and "talked horse" continually.

Old Robin sniffed disdainfully.

"Oh, it may be," said the young girl, turning her eyes on him with a little flash. She saw that the old darkey had caught the words.

BRED IN THE BONE

“What Mr. Johnston is it, uncle?” she asked, kindly, with a step forward.

“Mr. Theod’ric Johnston, madam.” He spoke with pride.

“What! *Colonel* Theodoric Johnston? Is he living still?” asked Colonel Ashland. “I thought he—How is he?”

“Oh, nor, suh! He ’s dead. He died about three years ago. Dis gent’mán is the gran’son—one o’ my young masters. I was the fust pusson ever put him on a hoss.”

“Can he ride?”

“Kin he ride! You wait an’ see him,” laughed the old man. “He ought to be able to ride! Ken a bud fly? Heah he now.”

He turned as the young owner, brown and tanned, and hardly more than a boy, came up through the crowd. He, like his horse, had been carefully groomed, and through his sun tan he bore a look of distinction. He was dressed for the race, but wore a coat over his faded silk jacket. As he turned and found Robin talking to a lady, his cap came off instinctively. The men looked at him scrutinizingly.

“Are you Colonel Theodoric Johnston’s grandson?” enquired Colonel Snowden. “He used to have some fine horses.”

BRED IN THE BONE

"Yes, sir." His eye stole to the horse that was just beside him, and the color mounted to his cheek.

"And he was a fine man. The turf lost one of its best ornaments when he retired." Colonel Ashland was the speaker.

"Yes, sir. Thank you, sir." His cap was in his hand, his words and manner were respectful, but when he spoke he looked the other in the eyes, and his eyes, though shy, were clear and calm.

"We were just admiring your horse," said the young lady, graciously.

He turned and looked at her with the color flashing up in his tanned cheeks.

"Thank you. I am glad if he meets with your approval." He ended his formal little speech with a quaint, slow bow. "I wish he were worthier of it."

"Oh, I am sure he is," she said, politely. "At least, you have our good wishes." Her eye fell on one of her companions. "Has n't he, Mr. Newby?"

The latter only looked at the younger man and grunted.

"Well, at least you have mine," she said, with an air of bravado.

BRED IN THE BONE

"Thank you. I 'll try to deserve them."

"Dat young lady knows a hoss," asserted old Robin, triumphantly. "Jes look at him, dyah. What bone an' muscle!" He raised the sheet and waved his dusky hand towards his charge.

"Yes, that 's what I say. Such bone and muscle!" she repeated, with pretended gravity.

"Especially the bone!" observed Mr. Newby, in a low tone.

"I shall back him," she said. She held in her hand a rose which had broken off its stem. She took it and stuck it in a loop in the sheet.

Just then the first bell sounded, and the hostlers began to get the horses ready to appear before the judges, while the riders went off to weigh in, and the crowd began to stream back to the stands. As the group turned away, the young owner took the rose from the loop and, with a shy look around, hid it in the breast of his jacket. His eye followed the white hat till it passed out of the paddock gate.

"Do you really think that horse can win?" asked Mr. Newby of the young lady, as they strolled along. "Because I tell you he can't. I thought you were a sport. Why, look at his hocks! He won't get over the Liverpool."

"I shall back him," said she. "What is the Liverpool?"

"Here, I 'll tell you what I 'll do," said Mr.

BRED IN THE BONE

Newby. "I 'll bet you two to one he does n't win the race." He winked at the others.

"Very well. I don't approve of betting, but I 'll do it this time just to punish you."

"Now I 'll bet you two to one he does n't come in second—that boy won't get him over the water-jump."

"Very well—no, I don't want to take odds. I 'll bet you even. I must be a sport."

The other protested, while the rest of the party looked on with amusement.

"Oh, well, if you insist," said Mr. Newby. "What shall it be?"

"A box of the best——"

"Of the best cigars?"

"No; I don't smoke. Candy."

"Oh, you expect to win?"

"Of course. Who ever saw such bone and muscle?"

They reached their places in the box, smiling and bowing to their acquaintances about them.

As soon as they were settled, the young lady picked up a paper lying by, and began to search diligently for the name of her horse.

"Ah, here it is!" She began to read. It was a column of forecasts. Tell me, please, what does '100 to 1' mean?"

"That the horse is selling at that."

BRED IN THE BONE

“Selling? What does that mean?”

There was an explosion of laughter from those about her. They explained.

“Oh, what cheats men are!” she exclaimed with conviction.

“Come, I ’ll let you off if you ask quarter,” laughed Mr. Newby. “No horse can jump with knees as big as that.”

“Never! I ’ll back him to the end,” she declared. “Oh, there he is now! There is his yellow jacket,” she added, as the buzz grew louder about them, and glasses were levelled at the horses as they filed by spirited and springy on their way to the starting-point some furlongs down the course. No one else appeared to be looking at the big brown. But his rider was scanning the boxes till his eye rested on a big hat with a white feather; then he sat up very straight.

Two of the gentlemen came up from the paddock. Colonel Snowden had the horse that was next to the favorite. They were now talking over the chances.

“Well, what are you going to do? How do you stand?” his friends asked.

“A good chance to win. I don’t know what that new horse can do, of course; but I should not think he could beat Hurricane.”

BRED IN THE BONE

"Of course he cannot," said Mr. Newby. "Ridden by a green country boy!"

"He has some good points and has a fine pedigree."

Mr. Newby raised his eyebrows. "So has his rider; but pedigrees don't count in rides."

"I never could understand why blood should count in horses and not in men," said Miss Ashland, placidly. "Oh, I hope he 'll win!" she exclaimed, turning her eager face and glancing back at the gentlemen over her shoulder.

"Well, I like that!" laughed Colonel Snowden. "With all that money on the race! I thought you were backing Hurricane?"

"Oh, but he hasn't anybody to back him," she protested. "No; I sha' n't back Hurricane. I shall back him."

"Which? The horse or the rider?"

"The horse—no, both!" she declared, firmly. "And oh, papa," she exclaimed, glancing back at him over her shoulder, "they say he wants to win to send his sister to school and to go to college himself."

"Well, I must say you seem to have learned a good deal about him for the time you had."

She nodded brightly. "That 's what the old colored man told a friend of mine."

"If he does n't go to college till he wins with

BRED IN THE BONE

that horse," said Mr. Newby, "he is likely to find his education abbreviated."

"I shall back him, anyhow." She settled herself in her seat.

"Here, I 'll tell you what I will do. I will bet you he don't get a place," said Mr. Newby.

"How much? What is a 'place'?" she asked.

It was explained to her.

"How much—a hundred to one?"

"No; not that!"

"You 're learning," laughed her friends.

"There! they 're off. Here they come!" buzzed the crowd, as the flag at last fell, and they came up the field, a dozen in all, two in the lead, then a half-dozen together in a bunch, and two or three behind, one in the rear of all. Old Robin's heart dropped as the cry went up: "The countryman 's left. It 's yellow-jacket!" It was too far off for him to see clearly, but the laughter about him was enough.

"That boy don't know how to ride. What did they put him in for?" they said.

A minute later, however, the tone changed. The country boy was coming up, and was holding his horse in, too. The riders were settling themselves and spreading out, getting their horses in hand for the long gallop.

BRED IN THE BONE

In fact, the old trainer's last piece of advice to his young pupil was worthy of a Delphic track.

"Don' let 'em lef' you; but don't let 'em wind you. Don't git so far behind 't folks 'll think you 's ridin' in de next race; but save him for de last half-mile. You 'll have plenty o' room den to let him out, an' de track 's mighty heavy. Watch Hurricane an' Fightin' Creek. Keep nigh 'em, but save him, an' look out for de Liverpool."

It was on this advice that the young rider was acting, and though he was in the rear at the start he did not mind it. He saw that two or three riders were trying to set the pace to kill off the other horses, and he held his horse in, picking his ground.

So they passed two or three fences, the horses in the same order, and came toward the water-jump in front of the stands. It was a temptation to rush for it, for the safest chance was in front, and the eyes of thousands were on them. Some of the riders did rush, and the leaders got over it well; but in the bunch two horses struck and went down, one going over and turning a complete somersault on the other side, the other from a false take-off falling back

BRED IN THE BONE

on the near side, with his rider almost under him, immediately in front of young Johnston's horse. Whether it was the fall of the two horses with the splash of the water in the ditch beyond, or whether it was the sudden twitch that Johnston gave his bridle to turn the brown as the horse and rider rolled almost immediately before him, or whether it was all these taken together, the brown horse swerved and refused turning entirely back, while the rest of the field swept on. The other horses and riders had scrambled to their feet, and the mind of the crowd was relieved. They broke into a great shout of laughter as the rider of the brown deliberately rode the horse back.

"You are going the wrong way!"

"He 's going to meet 'em!" they shouted, derisively.

Even the gentlemen about the young girl of the white hat in the club box who had backed the brown horse could not help joining in.

"Now, Miss Catherine, where are you?" asked Mr. Newby. "Will you allow that I can pick a horse better than you? If so, I 'll let you off."

"He pulled him out to avoid striking those other men," declared the girl, warmly. "I saw him."

BRED IN THE BONE

“Oh, nonsense! Who ever heard of a man pulling out in a steeplechase to avoid striking another horse? I have heard of a man pulling out to avoid killing his own horse; but that boy pulled out because his horse refused. That horse had more sense than he. He knew he could n’t take it. Hello! what ’s he doing?” For young Johnston, his face set hard, had turned his horse and headed him again toward the jump. At that moment the other horses were rising the slope on top of which was the next jump, and the brown caught sight of them. He had appeared till now a little bewildered; but the effect was electrical. His head went up, his ears went forward; a sudden fury seemed to seize him, and he shot forward like a rocket, while the crowd on the other side of the track hooted in derision.

“By Jove! He ’ll go down if he rushes like that,” cried the men in the box. But he did not. He hardly appeared to see the fence before him any more than he heard the jeers of the crowd. With high head and pointed ears, he dashed at it, taking it in his stride, and clearing it with a mighty bound.

The crowd in the stands, carried away, burst into a storm of applause, and the gentlemen

BRED IN THE BONE

about the young girl of the big white hat clapped their hands.

Old Robin, down in the paddock, was shouting and talking volubly to a crowd of strangers.

"He 's a jumper! He 's got de pedigree. Dat 's blood. You ain' see my old master's hosses befo'."

"Your old master's horses!" growled a gruff voice behind him. "You made me lose fifty dollars on yer blanked horse wid yer blanked lies. You 'll pay it back or yer won't see that watch ag'in."

Robin glanced at the angry pawnbroker, but he did not have time to argue then. The horse galloping up the long slope before the stables engrossed his attention. He simply edged away from his reviler, who went off to "hedge" his bets, if possible.

"He 's a good horse, but he 's out of the race," said one of the gentlemen who had been bantering Miss Ashland.

"Yes, but he never had a chance—a mere flash. You can't expect a common pick-up to run against a field like that."

Mr. Newby turned back to the girl, who was leaning forward watching the horse going over the hill.

BRED IN THE BONE

“Well, Miss Catherine, ready to ask terms yet?”

“No; was n’t that the water-jump?”

“Yes; but he has got to go over it again. Come, I ’ll bet you twenty to one he does n’t win.”

“Done.”

“Now I ’ll bet you a hundred and twenty to one he does n’t get a place.”

“Done.”

“Now I ’ll even things up, and bet you he does n’t come in——”

“Done!” said the girl, turning on him with a sudden flash. “He shall come in, if I have to go down there and ride him in myself.”

An exclamation from one of the others broke in on this banter:

“Blessed if he is n’t gaining on them!”

And sure enough, as the brown horse came out from beyond the hill, though he was still far to the rear of the field, he had undoubtedly lessened the gap between them. The young girl’s eyes sparkled.

“Oh, he can’t keep it up. He ’s riding his heart out,” said one of the other gentlemen, with his glasses to his eyes. “But he ’s a bet-

BRED IN THE BONE

ter horse than I thought, and if he had had a rider he might——”

“He has got to make the Liverpool, and he ’ll never do it,” said Mr. Newby. “There he goes now. Watch him. Jupiter! he ’s over!”

“Did you see that jump? He ’s got stuff in him!”

“But not enough. He ’s got to go around once and a half yet.”

“The blue is leading.” “Red-jacket is coming up.” “The green is done for,” etc.

So it went, with the horses coming around the curve for the second time. The favorite and about half the others were running well, their riders beginning to take the pace they proposed to keep to the end. Several others were trailing along behind at various distances, among them the two horses that had shot out in the lead at first, and behind all but the last one, which was manifestly already beaten, the big brown horse, galloping with head still up and ears still pointed forward, bent on catching the horses ahead of him.

The field swept by the stands, most of them getting safely over the big water-jump, though several of the horses struck hard, and one of them went on his knees, pitching his rider over

BRED IN THE BONE

his head. The country horse had still to take the leap, and all eyes were on him, for it was the jump he had refused. Bets were offered that he would refuse again, or that after his killing chase he would be too winded to clear it and would go down. At any rate, they agreed the boy who was riding him was crazy, and he could never last to come in.

Old Robin ran across the track to try and stop him. He waved his arms wildly.

“Pull out. You ’ll kill him! Save him for another time. Don’t kill him!” he cried.

But the young rider was of a different mind. The vision of two girls was in his thoughts—one a young girl down on an old plantation, and the other a girl in white in a front box in the club. She had looked at him with kind eyes and backed him against the field. He would win or die.

The horse, too, had his life in the race. Unheeding the wild waving of the old trainer’s arms, he swept by him with head still up and ears still forward, his eyes riveted on the horses galloping in front of him. Once or twice his ears were bent toward the big fence as if to gauge it, and then his eyes looked off to the horses running up the slope beyond it. When

BRED IN THE BONE

he reached the jump he rose so far from it that a cry of anxiety went up. But it changed to a wild shout of applause as he cleared everything in his stride and lighted far beyond the water. Old Robin, whose arms were high in the air with horror as he rose, dropped them, and then, jerking off his hat, he waved it wildly around his head.

“He can fly. He ain’t a hoss at all; he ’s a bud!” he shouted. “Let him go, son; let him go! You ’ll win yet.”

But horse and rider were beyond the reach of his voice, galloping up the slope.

Once more they all disappeared behind the hill, and once more the leaders came out, one ahead of the others, then two together, then two more, running along the inside of the fence toward the last jumps, where they would strike the clear track and come around the turn into the home stretch. The other horses were trailing behind the five leaders when they went over the hill. Now, as they came out again, one of the second batch was ahead of all the others and was making up lost ground after the leaders. Suddenly a cry arose: “The yellow! The orange! It ’s the countryman!”

“Impossible! It is, and he is overhauling ’em!”

BRED IN THE BONE

"If he lives over the Liverpool, he 'll get a place," said one of the gentlemen in the club box.

"But he can't do it. He must be dead," said Mr. Newby. "There goes one now. The red-jacket 's down."

"I 'm out," said Mr. Galloper. "He 's up all right."

"He 'll get over," said the girl. "Oh, I can't look! Tell me when he 's safe." She buried her face in her hands.

"There he goes. Oh!"

"Oh, is he down?" she panted.

"Jove! No—he 's over clear and clean, running like a streak," said the gentleman, with warm admiration. "He 's safe now. Only two more hurdles. It 's all clear. That boy is riding him, too."

The girl sprang to her feet.

"Give me your glasses. It is—it is! He 's safe!" she cried. She turned to Newby who stood next to her. "Ask quarter and I 'll let you off."

"He 'll never be able to stand the track. It 's fetlock-deep."

But at that moment the horses turned into the track, and the real race began. Newby's prophecy went to the winds. As was seen, the

BRED IN THE BONE

leaders were riding against each other. They had dropped out of account all the other horses. They had not even seen the brown. The first thing they knew was the shout from the crowd ahead of them, blown down to them hoarsely as the big brown horse wheeled into the stretch behind them. He was ahead of the other horses and was making hotly after the four horses in the lead. He was running now with neck outstretched; but he was running, and he was surely closing up the gap. The blood of generations of four-mile winners was flaming in his veins. It was even possible that he might get a place. The crowd began to be excited. They packed against the fences, straining their necks.

How he was running! One by one he picked them up.

“He ’s past the fourth horse, and is up with the third!”

The crowd began to shout, to yell, to scream. The countryman, not content with a place, was bent on winning the race. He was gaining, too.

The two leaders, being well separated, were easing up, Hurricane, the bay, in front, the black, the favorite, next, with the third well to the rear. The trainers were down at the fence, screaming and waving their arms.

BRED IN THE BONE

They saw the danger that the riders had forgot.

"Come on! Come on!" they shouted.

Old Robin was away down the track, waving like mad. Suddenly the rider of the second horse saw his error. The rush of a horse closing up on him caught his ear. He looked around to see a big brown horse with a white blaze in the forehead, that he had not seen since the start, right at his quarter, about to slip between him and the fence. He had just time to draw in to the fence, and for a moment there was danger of the two horses coming down together.

At the sight old Robin gave a cry.

"Look at him! Runnin' my hoss in de fence! Cut him down! Cut him down!"

But the brown's rider pulled his horse around, came by on the outside, and drew up to the flank of the first horse. He was gaining so fast that the crowd burst into shouts, some cheering on the leader, some the great brown which had made such a race.

The boxes were a babel. Everyone was on his feet.

"The yellow 's gaining!"

"No; the blue 's safe."

BRED IN THE BONE

"Orange may get it," said Colonel Ashland. "He 's the best horse, and well ridden."

He was up to the bay's flank. Whip and spur were going as the leader saw his danger.

Old Robin was like a madman.

"Come on! Come on!" he shouted. "Give him de whip—cut him in two—lift him! Look at him—my hoss! Come on, son! Oh, ef my ol' master was jest heah!"

A great roar ran along the fences and over the paddock and stands as the two horses shot in together.

"Oh, he has won, he has won!" cried the girl in the big hat, springing up on a chair in ecstasy.

"No; it 's the blue by a neck," said her father. "I congratulate you, Snowden. But that 's a great horse. It 's well that it was not a furlong farther."

"I think so," said the owner of the winner, hurrying away.

"They have cheated him. I am sure he won," asserted the young lady.

They laughed at her enthusiasm.

"Newby," said one of the gentlemen, "you 'd better get Miss Catherine to pick your horses for you." Newby winced.

BRED IN THE BONE

“Oh, it ’s easy!” said the girl, nonchalantly. “Bone and muscle—and a green country boy—with a pedigree.”

IV

As Johnston was leading his horse away, the gentleman who had fallen at the water-jump came up to him.

“I want to thank you,” he said. “I saw you pull him around.”

“I was afraid I ’d strike you,” said the other, simply.

Just then two gentlemen pushed through the crowd. One was Mr. Newby.

“Are you the owner of this horse?” he asked the young man.

“Yes, sir.” He spoke with pride.

“Dat he is de owner,” put in old Robin, who had the bridle, “an’ he owns a good hoss! He got de ambition.”

“Want to sell him?”

“Um-um-hm—d’ n’ know. I came on to sell him.”

“Don’t you sell him. Don’t you never sell him,” urged the old trainer. “Keep him, an’

BRED IN THE BONE

le' me handle him for you. You 'll git mo' 'n second money next time."

"I 'll give you a thousand dollars for him. What do you say?"

Old Robin gave an exclamation.

"A thousand dollars! For dis hoss!"

The gentleman's friend broke in:

"Oh, come, Newby, don't rob the boy. He 'll give you two thousand," he laughed.

They were examining the horse as he walked along under his blanket.

"Two thousand?" The boy was hesitating. It was a great sum to him.

"No; but I 'll split the difference," said Mr. Newby: "I 'll give you fifteen hundred for him if he is as good as I think him when I look him over. What 's his name?"

"Jefferson Davis."

"Oh, the devil! I 'll change his name pretty quickly."

"No, you won't," said the boy.

"Won't I? I 'll show you when I get him," he muttered. "Well, what do you say?"

"Will you promise not to change his name?"

The other laughed.

"Not much! When I buy him he 's my horse."

BRED IN THE BONE

"He 'll never be your horse."

"What?"

"He 's not for sale." He turned away.

"Oh, nonsense! Here; wait——"

"I would not sell him to you, sir, at any price. Good-morning." He moved on.

"You 've lost a good horse," said his friend.

"Oh, I 'll get him yet!"

"I don't think so," said Colonel Ashland, who, with his daughter on his arm, had come up to congratulate the young rider.

"I wish I might have won for you," said the young man to Miss Ashland. His cap was in his hand and he made the same quaint bow that he had made before.

"I think you did win; at least, you ought to have had it. My father says he is a great horse."

At the words the color mounted to his sun-burned cheeks. "Thank you," he said, and looked suddenly deep into her eyes.

She put out her hand to pet the horse, and he turned and rested his head against her. She gave an exclamation of delight.

"Oh! father, look."

"We know our friends," said young Johnston.

BRED IN THE BONE

“Dat we does. She ’s de on’ies one as bet on him,” asserted old Robin. “Dat young lady knows a good hoss.”

“Who is that boy?” asked Mr. Newby, as the horse was led away.

“A green country boy with a pedigree,” said a low voice at his shoulder.

“Where does he come from?”

“Virginia,” said Colonel Ashland. “And his name is Theodoric Johnston. It ’s bred in the bone.”

Next morning as young Johnston rode his horse out of the stable gate, old Robin walked at his side. Just in front of the pawn-shop Robin pulled out his watch and examined it carefully.

“I don’ mind but one thing,” he said. “I did n’t have dis yisterday to hol’ de time on him. But nem mind: wait tell nex’ season.”

THE SPECTRE IN THE CART

THE SPECTRE IN THE CART

I

I HAD not seen my friend Stokeman since we were at college together, and now naturally we fell to talking of old times. I remembered him as a hard-headed man without a particle of superstition, if such a thing be possible in a land where we are brought up on superstition, from the bottle. He was at that time full of life and of enjoyment of whatever it brought. I found now that his wild and almost reckless spirits had been tempered by the years which had passed as I should not have believed possible, and that gravity had taken place of the gaiety for which he was then noted.

He used to maintain, I remember, that there was no apparition or supernatural manifestation, or series of circumstances pointing to such

BRED IN THE BONE

a manifestation, however strongly substantiated they appeared to be, that could not be explained on purely natural grounds.

During our stay at college a somewhat notable instance of what was by many supposed to be a supernatural manifestation occurred in a deserted house on a remote plantation in an adjoining county.

It baffled all investigation, and got into the newspapers, recalling the Cock Lane ghost, and many more less celebrated apparitions. Parties were organized to investigate it, but were baffled. Stokeman, on a bet of a box of cigars, volunteered to go out alone and explode the fraud; and did so, not only putting the restless spirit to flight, but capturing it and dragging it into town as the physical and indisputable witness both of the truth of his theory and of his personal courage. The exploit gave him immense notoriety in our little world.

I was, therefore, no little surprised to hear him say seriously now that he had come to understand how people saw apparitions.

"I have seen them myself," he added, gravely.

"You do not mean it!" I sat bolt upright in my chair in my astonishment. I had my-

THE SPECTRE IN THE CART

self, largely through his influence, become a sceptic in matters relating to the supernatural.

“Yes, I have seen ghosts. They not only have appeared to me, but were as real to my ocular vision as any other external physical object which I saw with my eyes.

“Of course, it was an hallucination. Tell me; I can explain it.”

“I explained it myself,” he said, dryly. “But it left me with a little less conceit and a little more sympathy with the hallucinations of others not so gifted.”

It was a fair hit.

“In the year—,” he went on, after a brief period of reflection, “I was the State’s Attorney for my native county, to which office I had been elected a few years after I left college, and the year we emancipated ourselves from carpet-bag rule, and I so remained until I was appointed to the bench. I had a personal acquaintance, pleasant or otherwise, with every man in the county. The district was a close one, and I could almost have given the census of the population. I knew every man who was for me and almost every one who was against me. There were few neutrals. In those times much

BRED IN THE BONE

hung on the elections. There was no borderland. Men were either warmly for you or hotly against you.

“We thought we were getting into smooth water, where the sailing was clear, when the storm suddenly appeared about to rise again. In the canvass of that year the election was closer than ever and the contest hotter.

“Among those who went over when the lines were thus sharply drawn was an old darky named Joel Turnell, who had been a slave of one of my nearest neighbors, Mr. Eaton, and whom I had known all my life as an easy-going, palavering old fellow with not much principle, but with kindly manners and a likable way. He had always claimed to be a supporter of mine, being one of the two or three negroes in the county who professed to vote with the whites.

“He had a besetting vice of pilfering, and I had once or twice defended him for stealing and gotten him off, and he appeared to be grateful to me. I always doubted him a little; for I believed he did not have force of character enough to stand up against his people, and he was a chronic liar. Still, he was always friendly with me, and used to claim the emolu-

THE SPECTRE IN THE CART

ments and privileges of such a relation. Now, however, on a sudden, in this campaign he became one of my bitterest opponents. I attributed it to the influence of a son of his, named Absalom, who had gone off from the county during the war when he was only a youth, and had stayed away for many years without anything being known of him, and had now returned unexpectedly. He threw himself into the fight. He claimed to have been in the army, and he appeared to have a deep-seated animosity against the whites, particularly against all those whom he had known in boyhood. He was a vicious-looking fellow, broad-shouldered and bow-legged, with a swagger in his gait. He had an ugly scar on the side of his throat, evidently made by a knife, though he told the negroes, I understood, that he had got it in the war, and was ready to fight again if he but got the chance. He had not been back long before he was in several rows, and as he was of brutal strength, he began to be much feared by the negroes. Whenever I heard of him it was in connection with some fight among his own people, or some effort to excite race animosity. When the canvass began he flung himself into it with fury, and I must say with marked effect.

BRED IN THE BONE

His hostility appeared to be particularly directed against myself, and I heard of him in all parts of the district declaiming against me. The negroes who, for one or two elections, had appeared to have quieted down and become indifferent as to politics were suddenly revived. It looked as if the old scenes of the Reconstruction period, when the two sides were like hostile armies, might be witnessed again. Night meetings, or 'camp-fires,' were held all through the district, and from many of them came the report of Absalom Turnell's violent speeches stirring up the blacks and arraying them against the whites. Our side was equally aroused and the whole section was in a ferment. Our effort was to prevent any outbreak and tide over the crisis.

"Among my friends was a farmer named John Halloway, one of the best men in my county, and a neighbor and friend of mine from my boyhood. His farm, a snug little homestead of fifty or sixty acres, adjoined our plantation on one side; and on the other, that of the Eatons, to whom Joel Turnell and his son Absalom had belonged, and I remember that as a boy it was my greatest privilege and reward to go over on a Saturday and be allowed by John

THE SPECTRE IN THE CART

Halloway to help him plough, or cut his hay. He was a big, ruddy-faced, jolly boy, and even then used to tell me about being in love with Fanny Peel, who was the daughter of another farmer in the neighborhood, and a Sunday-school scholar of my mother's. I thought him the greatest man in the world. He had a fight once with Absalom Turnell when they were both youngsters, and, though Turnell was rather older and much the heavier, whipped him completely. Halloway was a good soldier and a good son, and when he came back from the war and won his wife, who was a belle among the young farmers, and settled down with her on his little place, which he proceeded to make a bower of roses and fruit-trees, there was not a man in the neighborhood who did not rejoice in his prosperity and wish him well. The Halloways had no children and, as is often the case in such instances, they appeared to be more to each other than are most husbands and wives. He always spoke of his wife as if the sun rose and set in her. No matter where he might be in the county, when night came he always rode home, saying that his wife would be expecting him. 'Don't keer whether she 's asleep or not,' he used to say to those who bantered him, 'she

BRED IN THE BONE

knows I 'm a-comin', and she always hears my click on the gate-latch, and is waitin' for me.'

"It came to be well understood throughout the county.

" 'I believe you are hen-pecked,' said a man to him one night.

" 'I believe I am, George,' laughed Halloway, 'and by Jings! I like it, too.'

"It was impossible to take offence at him, he was so good-natured. He would get out of his bed in the middle of the night, hitch up his horse and pull his bitterest enemy out of the mud. He had on an occasion ridden all night through a blizzard to get a doctor for the wife of a negro neighbor in a cabin near by who was suddenly taken ill. When someone expressed admiration for it, especially as it was known that the man had not long before been abusing Halloway to the provost-marshal, who at that time was in supreme command, he said:

" 'Well, what 's that got to do with it? Wa'n't the man's wife sick? I don't deserve no credit, though; if I had n't gone, my wife would n' 'a' let me come in her house.'

"He was an outspoken man, too, not afraid of the devil, and when he believed a thing he spoke it, no matter whom it hit. In this way

THE SPECTRE IN THE CART

John had been in trouble several times while we were under 'gun-rule'; and this, together with his personal character, had given him great influence in the county, and made him a power. He was one of my most ardent friends and supporters, and to him, perhaps, more than to any other two men in the county, I owed my position.

"Absalom Turnell's rancorous speeches had stirred all the county, and the apprehension of the outbreak his violence was in danger of bringing might have caused trouble but for John Halloway's coolness and level-headedness. John offered to go around and follow Absalom up at his meetings. He could 'spike his guns,' he said.

"Some of his friends wanted to go with him. 'You 'd better not try that,' they argued. That fellow, Ab. Turnell 's got it in for you.' But he said no. The only condition on which he would go was that he should go alone.

" 'They ain't any of 'em going to trouble me. I know 'em all and I git along with 'em first rate. I don't know as I know this fellow Ab.; he 's sort o' grown out o' my recollection; but I want to see. He knows me, I know. I got my hand on him once when he was a boy—

BRED IN THE BONE

about my age, and he ain't forgot that, I know. He was a blusterer; but he did n't have real grit. He won't say nothin' to my face. But I must go alone. You all are too flighty.'

"So Halloway went alone and followed Ab. up at his 'camp-fires,' and if report was true his mere presence served to curb Ab.'s fury, and take the fire out of his harangues. Even the negroes got to laughing and talking about it. 'Ab. was jest like a dog when a man faced him,' they said; 'he could n' look him in the eye.'

"The night before the election there was a meeting at one of the worst places in the county, a country store at a point known as Burley's Fork, and Halloway went there, alone—and for the first time in the canvass thought it necessary to interfere. Absalom, stung by the taunts of some of his friends, and having stimulated himself with mean whiskey, launched out in a furious tirade against the whites generally, and me in particular; and called on the negroes to go to the polls next day prepared to 'wade in blood to their lips.' For himself, he said, he had 'drunk blood' before, both of white men and women, and he meant to drink it again. He whipped out and flourished a pistol in one hand and a knife in the other.

THE SPECTRE IN THE CART

His language exceeded belief, and the negroes, excited by his violence, were showing the effect on their emotions of his wild declamation, and were beginning to respond with shouts and cries when Halloway rose and walked forward. Absalom turned and started to meet him, yelling his fury and threats, and the audience were rising to their feet when they were stopped. It was described to me afterward.

“Halloway was in the midst of a powder magazine, absolutely alone, a single spark would have blown him to atoms and might have caused a catastrophe which would have brought untold evil. But he was as calm as a May morning. He walked through them, the man who told me said, as if he did not know there was a soul in a hundred miles of him, and as if Absalom were only something to be swept aside.

“‘He wa’ n’t exac’ly laughin’, or even smilin’, said my informant, ‘but he jest looked easy in his mine.’

“‘They were all waiting, he said, expecting Absalom to tear him to pieces on the spot; but as Halloway advanced, Absalom faltered and stopped. He could not stand his calm eye.

“‘It was jest like a dog givin’ way before

BRED IN THE BONE

a man who ain't afraid of him,' my man said. 'He breshed Absalom aside as if he had been a fly, and began to talk to us, and I never heard such a speech.'

"I got there just after it happened; for some report of what Absalom intended to do had reached me that night and I rode over hastily, fearing that I might arrive too late. When, however, I arrived at the place everything was quiet, Absalom had disappeared. Unable to face his downfall, he had gone off, taking old Joel with him. The tide of excitement had changed and the negroes, relieved at the relaxing of the tension, were laughing among themselves at their champion's defeat and disavowing any sympathy with his violence. They were all friendly with Holloway.

" 'Dat man wa' n' nothin' but a' outside nigger, nohow,' they said. 'And he always was more mouth then anything else,' etc.

" 'Good L—d! He say he want to drink blood!' declared one man to another, evidently for us to hear, as we mounted our horses.

" 'Drink *whiskey!*' replied the other, dryly, and there was a laugh of derision.

"I rode home with Holloway.

THE SPECTRE IN THE CART

"I shall never forget his serenity. As we passed along, the negroes were lining the roads on their way homeward, and were shouting and laughing among themselves; and the greetings they gave us as we passed were as civil and good-humored as if no unpleasantness had ever existed. A little after we set out, one man, who had been walking very fast just ahead of us, and had been keeping in advance all the time, came close to Halloway's stirrup and said something to him in an undertone. All I caught was, layin' up something against him.'

" 'That 's all right, Dick; let him lay it up, and keep it laid up,' Halloway laughed.

" 'Dat 's a bad feller!' the negro insisted, uneasily, his voice kept in an undertone. 'You got to watch him. I'se knowed him from a boy.'

"He added something else in a whisper which I did not catch.

" 'All right; certainly not! Much obliged to you, Dick. I 'll keep my eyes open. Good-night.'

" 'Good-night, gent'men'; and the negro fell back and began to talk with the nearest of his companions effusively.

" 'Who is that?' I asked, for the man had kept his hat over his eyes.

BRED IN THE BONE

“ ‘That ’s Dick Winchester. You remember that old fellow ’t used to belong to old Mr. Eaton—lived down in the pines back o’ me, on the creek ’t runs near my place. His wife died the year of the big snow.’

“ ‘It was not necessary for him to explain further. I remembered the negro for whom Holloway had ridden through the storm that night.

“ ‘I asked Holloway somewhat irrelevantly, if he carried a pistol. He said no, he had never done so.

“ ‘ ‘Fact is, I ’m afraid of killin’ somebody. And I don’t want to do that, I know. Never could bear to shoot my gun even durin’ o’ the war, though I shot her ’bout as often as any of ’em, I reckon—always used to shut my eyes right tight whenever I pulled the trigger. I reckon I was a mighty pore soldier,’ he laughed. I had heard that he was one of the best in the army.

“ ‘ ‘Besides, I always feel sort o’ cowardly if I ’ve got a pistol on. Looks like I was afraid of somebody—an’ I ain’t. I ’ve noticed if two fellows have pistols on and git to fightin’, mighty apt to one git hurt, maybe both. Sort o’ like two dogs growling—long as don’t but one of ’em growl it ’s all right. If don’t but one

THE SPECTRE IN THE CART

have a pistol, t' other feller always has the advantage and sort o' comes out top, while the man with the pistol looks mean.'

"I remember how he looked in the dim moonlight as he drawled his quaint philosophy.

" 'I 'm a man o' peace, Mr. Johnny, and I learnt that from your mother—I learnt a heap o' things from her,' he added, presently, after a little period of reflection. 'She was the lady as used always to have a kind word for me when I was a boy. That 's a heap to a boy. I used to think she was an angel. You think it 's *you* I 'm a fightin' for in this canvass? 'T ain't. I like you well enough, but I ain't never forgot your mother, and her kindness to my old people durin' the war when I was away. She give me this handkerchief for a weddin' present when I was married after the war—said 't was all she had to give, and my wife thinks the world and all of it; won't let me have it 'cept as a favor; but this mornin' she told me to take it—said 'twould bring me luck.' He took a big bandana out of his pocket and held it up in the moonlight. I remembered it as one of my father's.

" 'She 'll make me give it up to-morrow night when I git home,' he chuckled.

BRED IN THE BONE

“We had turned into a road through the plantations, and had just come to the fork where Halloway’s road turned off toward his place.

“ ‘I lays a heap to your mother’s door—purty much all this, I reckon.’ His eye swept the moon-bathed scene before him. ‘But for her I might n’t ’a got *her*. And ain’t a’ man in the world got a happier home, or *as* good a wife.’ He waved his hand toward the little homestead that was sleeping in the moonlight on the slope the other side of the stream, a picture of peace.

“His path went down a little slope, and mine kept along the side of the hill until it entered the woods. A great sycamore tree grew right in the fork, with its long, hoary arms extending over both roads, making a broad mass of shadow in the white moonlight.

“The next day was the day of election. Halloway was at one poll and I was at another; so I did not see him that day. But he sent me word that evening that he had carried his poll, and I rode home knowing that we should have peace.

“I was awakened next morning by the news that both Halloway and his wife had been murdered the night before. I at once galloped over

THE SPECTRE IN THE CART

to his place, and was one of the first to get there. It was a horrible sight. Halloway had evidently been waylaid and killed by a blow of an axe just as he was entering his yard gate, and then the door of the house had been broken open and his wife had been killed, after which Halloway's body had been dragged into the house, and the house had been fired with the intention of making it appear that the house had burned by accident. But by one of those inscrutable fatalities, the fire, after burning half of two walls, had gone out.

“It was a terrible sight, and the room looked like a shambles. Halloway had plainly been caught unawares while leaning over his gate. The back of his head had been crushed in with the eye of an axe, and he had died instantly. The pleasant thought which was in his mind at the instant—perhaps, of the greeting that always awaited him on the click of his latch; perhaps, of his success that day; perhaps, of my mother's kindness to him when he was a boy—was yet on his face, stamped there indelibly by the blow that killed him. There he lay, face upward, as the murderer had thrown him after bringing him in, stretched out his full length on the floor, with his quiet face upturned, look-

BRED IN THE BONE

ing in that throng of excited, awe-stricken men, just what he had said he was: a man of peace. His wife, on the other hand, wore a terrified look on her face. There had been a terrible struggle. She had lived to taste the bitterness of death, before it took her."

Stokeman, with a little shiver, put his hand over his eyes as though to shut out the vision that recurred to him. After a long breath he began again.

"In a short time there was a great crowd there, white and black. The general mind flew at once to Absalom Turnell. The negroes present were as earnest in their denunciation as the whites; perhaps, more so, for the whites were past threatening. I knew from the grimness that trouble was brewing, and I felt that if Absalom were caught and any evidence were found on him, no power on earth could save him. A party rode off in search of him, and went to old Joel's house. Neither Absalom nor Joel were there; they had not been home since the election, one of the women said.

"As a law officer of the county I was to a certain extent in charge at Halloway's and in looking around for all the clews to be found,

THE SPECTRE IN THE CART

I came on a splinter of 'light-wood' not as large or as long as one's little finger, stuck in a crack in the floor near the bed: a piece of a stick of 'fat-pine,' such as negroes often carry about, and use as tapers. One end had been burned; but the other end was clean and was jagged just as it had been broken off. There was a small scorched place on the planks on either side, and it was evident that this was one of the splinters that had been used in firing the house. I called a couple of the coolest, most level-headed men present and quietly showed them the spot, and they took the splinter out and I put it in my pocket.

"By one of those fortuitous chances which so often happen in every lawyer's experience, and appear inexplicable, Old Joel Turnell walked up to the house just as we came out. He was as sympathetic as possible, appeared outraged at the crime, professed the highest regard for Halloway, and the deepest sorrow at his death. The sentiment of the crowd was rather one of sympathy with him, that he should have such a son as Absalom.

"I took the old man aside to have a talk with him, to find out where his son was and where he had been the night before. He was equally

BRED IN THE BONE

vehement in his declarations of his son's innocence, and of professions of regard for Halloway. And suddenly to my astonishment he declared that his son had spent the night with him and had gone away after sunrise.

“Then happened one of those fatuous things that have led to the detection of so many negroes and can almost be counted on in their prosecution. Joel took a handkerchief out of his pocket and wiped his face, and as he did so I recognized the very handkerchief Halloway had shown me the night before. With the handkerchief, Joel drew out several splinters of light-wood, one of which had been broken off from a longer piece. I picked it up and it fitted exactly into the piece that had been stuck in the crack in the floor. At first, I could scarcely believe my own senses. Of course, it became my duty to have Joel arrested immediately. But I was afraid to have it done there, the crowd was so deeply incensed. So I called the two men to whom I had shown the light-wood splinter, told them the story, and they promised to get him away and arrest him quietly and take him safely to jail, which they did.

“Even then we did not exactly believe that the old man had any active complicity in the

THE SPECTRE IN THE CART

crime, and I was blamed for arresting the innocent old father and letting the guilty son escape. The son, however, was arrested shortly afterward.

“The circumstances from which the crime arose gave the case something of a political aspect, and the prisoners had the best counsel to be procured, both at our local bar and in the capital. The evidence was almost entirely circumstantial, and when I came to work it up I found, as often occurs, that although the case was plain enough on the outside, there were many difficulties in the way of fitting all the circumstances to prove the guilt of the accused and to make out every link in the chain. Particularly was this so in the prosecution of the young man, who was supposed to be the chief criminal, and in whose case there was a strong effort to prove an alibi.

“As I worked, I found to my surprise that the guilt of the old man, though based wholly on circumstantial evidence, was established more clearly than that of his son—not indeed, as to the murders, but as to the arson, which served just as well to convict on. The handkerchief, which Joel had not been able to resist the temptation to steal, and the splinter of light-

BRED IN THE BONE

wood in his pocket, which fitted exactly into that found in the house, together with other circumstances, proved his guilt conclusively. But although there was an equal moral certainty of the guilt of the young man, it was not so easy to establish it by law.

“Old Dick Winchester was found dead one morning and the alibi was almost completely proved, and only failed by the incredibility of the witnesses for the defence. Old Joel persistently declared that Absalom was innocent, and but for a confession by Absalom of certain facts intended to shift the suspicion from himself to his father, I do not know how his case might have turned out.

“I believed him to be the instigator as well as the perpetrator of the crime.

“I threw myself into the contest, and prosecuted with all the vigor I was capable of. And I finally secured the conviction of both men. But it was after a hard fight. They were the only instances in which, representing the Commonwealth, I was ever conscious of strong personal feeling, and of a sense of personal triumph. The memory of my last ride with Halloway, and of the things he had said to me; the circumstances under which he and his wife

THE SPECTRE IN THE CART

were killed; the knowledge that in some sort it was on my account; and the bitter attacks made on me personally (for in some quarters I was depicted as a bloodthirsty ruffian, and it was charged that I was for political reasons prosecuting men whom I personally knew to be innocent), all combined to spur me to my utmost effort. And when the verdicts were rendered, I was conscious of a sense of personal triumph so fierce as to shock me.

“Not that I did not absolutely believe in the guilt of both prisoners; for I considered that I had demonstrated it, and so did the jurors who tried them.

“The day of execution was set. An appeal was at once taken in both cases and a stay was granted, and I had to sustain the verdicts in the upper court. The fact that the evidence was entirely circumstantial had aroused great interest, and every lawyer in the State had his theory. The upper court affirmed in both cases and appeals were taken to the highest court, and again stay of execution was granted.

“The prisoners’ counsel had moved to have the prisoners transferred to another county, which I opposed. I was sure that the people of my county would observe the law. They had

BRED IN THE BONE

resisted the first fierce impulse, and were now waiting patiently for justice to take its course. Months passed, and the stay of execution had to be renewed. The road to Halloway's grew up and I understood that the house had fallen in, though I never went that way again. Still the court hung fire as to its conclusion.

"The day set for the execution approached for the third time without the court having rendered its decision.

"On the day before that set for the execution, the court gave its decision. It refused to interfere in the case of old Joel, but reversed and set aside the verdict in that of the younger man. Of a series of over one hundred bills of exception taken by his counsel as a 'drag-net,' one held; and owing to the admission of a single question by a juror, the judgment was set aside in Absalom's case and a new trial was ordered.

"Being anxious lest the excitement might increase, I felt it my duty to stay at the county-seat that night, and as I could not sleep I spent the time going over the records of the two cases; which, like most causes, developed new points every time they were read.

"Everything was perfectly quiet all night, though the village was filling up with people

THE SPECTRE IN THE CART

from the country to see the execution, which at that time was still public. I determined next morning to go to my home in the country and get a good rest, of which I began to feel the need. I was detained, however, and it was well along in the forenoon before I mounted my horse and rode slowly out of town through a back street. The lane kept away from the main road except at one point just outside of town, where it crossed it at right angles.

“It was a beautiful spring day—a day in which it is a pleasure merely to live, and as I rode along through the quiet lane under the leafy trees I could not help my mind wandering and dwelling on the things that were happening. I am not sure, indeed, that I was not dozing; for I reached the highway without knowing just where I was.

“I was recalled to myself by a rush of boys up the street before me, with a crowd streaming along behind them. It was the head of the procession. The sheriff and his men were riding, with set faces, in front and on both sides of a slowly moving vehicle; a common horse-cart in which in the midst of his guards, and dressed in his Sunday clothes, with a clean white shirt on, seated on his pine coffin, was old Joel. I

BRED IN THE BONE

unconsciously gazed at him, and at the instant he looked up and saw me. Our eyes met as naturally as if he had expected to find me there, and he gave me as natural and as friendly a bow—not a particle reproachful; but a little timid, as though he did not quite know whether I would speak to him.

“It gave me a tremendous shock. I had a sudden sinking of the heart, and nearly fell from my horse.

“I turned and rode away; but I could not shake off the feeling. I tried to reassure myself with the reflection that he had committed a terrible crime. It did not compose me. What insisted on coming to my mind was the eagerness with which I had prosecuted him and the joy I had felt at my success.

“Of course, I know now it was simply that I was overworked and needed rest; but at that time the trouble was serious.

“It haunted me all day, and that night I could not sleep. For many days afterwards, it clung to me, and I found myself unable to forget it, or to sleep as I had been used to do.

“The new trial of Absalom came on in time, and the fight was had all over again. It was longer than before, as every man in our county

THE SPECTRE IN THE CART

had an opinion, and a jury had to be brought from another county. But again the verdict was the same. And again an appeal was taken; was refused by the next higher court; and allowed by the highest; this time because a talesman had said he had expressed an opinion, but had not formed one. In time the appeal was heard once more, and after much delay, due to the number of cases on the docket and the immense labor of studying carefully so huge a record, it was decided. It was again reversed, on the technicality mentioned, and a new trial was ordered.

“That same day the court adjourned for the term.

“Having a bed-room adjoining my office, I spent that night in town. I did not go to sleep until late, and had not been asleep long when I was awakened by the continual repetition of a monotonous sound. At first I thought I was dreaming, but as I aroused it came to me distinctly: the sound of blows in the distance struck regularly. I awaked fully. The noise was in the direction of the jail. I dressed hastily and went down on the street. I stepped into the arms of a half-dozen masked men who quietly laid me on my back, blind-

BRED IN THE BONE

folded me and bound me so that I could not move. I threatened and struggled; but to no purpose, and finally gave it up and tried expostulation. They told me that they intended no harm to me; but that I was their prisoner and they meant to keep me. They had come for their man, they said, and they meant to have him. They were perfectly quiet and acted with the precision of old soldiers.

“All the time I could hear the blows at the jail as the mob pounded the iron door with sledges, and now and then a shout or cry from within.

“The blows were on the inner door, for the mob had quickly gained access to the outer corridor. They had come prepared and, stout as the door was, it could not resist long. Then one great roar went up and the blows ceased suddenly, and then one cry.

“In a little while I heard the regular tramp of men, and in a few minutes the column came up the street, marching like soldiers. There must have been five hundred of them. The prisoner was in the midst, bare-headed and walking between two mounted men, and was moaning and pleading and cursing by turns.

“I asked my captors if I might speak, and they gave me ten minutes. I stood up on the

THE SPECTRE IN THE CART

top step of the house, and for a few minutes I made what I consider to have been the best speech I ever made or shall make. I told them in closing that I should use all my powers to find out who they were, and if I could do so I should prosecute them, everyone, and try and have them hanged for murder.

“They heard me patiently, but without a word, and when I was through, one of the leaders made a short reply. They agreed with me about the law; but they felt that the way it was being used was such as to cause a failure of justice. They had waited patiently, and were apparently no nearer seeing justice executed than in the beginning. So they proposed to take the law into their own hands. The remedy was, to do away with all but proper defences and execute the law without unreasonable delay.

“It was the first mob I had ever seen, and I experienced a sensation of utter powerlessness and insignificance; just as in a storm at sea, a hurricane, or a conflagration. The individual disappeared before the irresistible force.

“An order was given and the column moved on silently.

“A question arose among my guards as to what should be done with me.

“They wished to pledge me to return to my

BRED IN THE BONE

rooms and take no steps until morning, but I would give no pledges. So they took me along with them.

“From the time they started there was not a word except the orders of the leader and his lieutenants and the occasional outcry of the prisoner, who prayed and cursed by turns.

“They passed out of the village and turned in at Halloway’s place.

“Here the prisoner made his last struggle. The idea of being taken to Halloway’s place appeared to terrify him to desperation. He might as well have struggled against the powers of the Infinite. He said he would confess everything if they would not take him there. They said they did not want his confession. He gave up, and from this time was quiet; and he soon began to croon a sort of hymn.

“The procession stopped at the big sycamore under which I had last parted from Halloway.

“I asked leave to speak again; but they said no. They asked the prisoner if he wanted to say anything. He said he wanted something to eat. The leader said he should have it; that it should never be said that any man—even he—had asked in vain for food in that county.

“Out of a haversack food was produced in

THE SPECTRE IN THE CART

plenty, and while the crowd waited, amidst profound silence the prisoner squatted down and ate up the entire plateful.

“Then the leader said he had just five minutes more to live and he had better pray.

“He began a sort of wild incoherent ramble; confessed that he had murdered Holloway and his wife, but laid the chief blame on his father, and begged them to tell his friends to meet him in heaven.

“I asked leave to go, and it was given me on condition that I would not return for twenty minutes. This I agreed to.

“I went to my home and aroused someone, and we returned. It was not much more than a half-hour since I had left, but the place was deserted. It was all as silent as the grave. There was no living creature there. Only under the great sycamore, from one of its long, pale branches that stretched across the road, hung that dead thing with the toes turned a little in, just out of our reach, turning and swaying a little in the night wind.

“We had to climb to the limb to cut the body down.

“The outside newspapers made a good deal of the affair. I was charged with indifference,

BRED IN THE BONE

with cowardice, with venality. Some journals even declared that I had instigated the lynching and participated in it, and said that I ought to be hanged.

“I did not mind this much. It buoyed me up, and I went on with my work without stopping for a rest, as I had intended to do.

“I kept my word and ransacked the county for evidence against the lynchers. Many knew nothing about the matter; others pleaded their privilege and refused to testify on the ground of self-crimination.

“The election came on again, and almost before I knew it I was in the midst of the canvass.

“I held that election would be an indorsement of me, and defeat would be a censure. After all, it is the indorsement of those about our own home that we desire.

“The night before the election I spoke to a crowd at Burley’s Fork. The place had changed since Halloway checked Absalom Turnell there. A large crowd was in attendance. I paid Halloway my personal tribute that night, and it met with a deep response. I denounced the lynching. There was a dead silence. I was sure that in my audience were many of the men who had been in the mob that night.

THE SPECTRE IN THE CART

“When I rode home quite a company started with me.

“The moon, which was on the wane, was, I remember, just rising as we set out. It was a soft night, rather cloudy, but not dark, for the sad moon shone a little now and then, looking wasted and red. The other men dropped off from time to time as we came to the several roads that led to their homes and at last I was riding alone. I was dead tired and after I was left by my companions sat loungingly on my horse. My mind ran on the last canvass and the strange tragedy that had ended it, with its train of consequences. I was not aware when my horse turned off from the main road into the by-lane that led through the Halloway place to my own home. My horse was the same I had ridden that night. I awaked suddenly to a realization of where I was, and regretted for a second that I had come by that road. The next moment I put the thought away as a piece of cowardice and rode on, my mind perfectly easy. My horse presently broke into a canter and I took a train of thought distinctly pleasant. I mention this to account for my inability to explain what followed. I was thinking of old times and of a holiday I had once spent at Halloway’s when old Joel came through on his way to his wife’s

BRED IN THE BONE

house. It was the first time I remembered ever seeing Joel. I was suddenly conscious of something white moving on the road before me. At the same second my horse suddenly wheeled with such violence as to break my stirrup-leather and almost throw me over his neck. I pulled him up and turned him back, and there before me, coming along the unused road up the hill from Halloway's, was old Joel, sitting in a cart, looking at me, and bowing to me politely just as he had done that morning on his way to the gallows; while dangling from the white limb of the sycamore, swaying softly in the wind, hung the corpse of Absalom. At first I thought it was an illusion and I rubbed my eyes. But there they were. Then I thought it was a delusion; and I reined in my horse and reasoned about it. But it was not; for I saw both men as plainly as I saw my stirrup-leather lying there in the middle of the road, and in the same way. My horse saw them too, and was so terrified that I could not keep him headed to them. Again and again I pulled him around and looked at the men and tried to reason about them; but every time I looked there they were, and my horse snorted and wheeled in terror. I could see the clothes they wore: the clean, white shirt

THE SPECTRE IN THE CART

and neat Sunday suit old Joel had on, and the striped, hickory shirt, torn on the shoulders, and the gray trousers that the lynched man wore—I could see the white rope wrapped around the limb and hanging down, and the knot at his throat; I remembered them perfectly. I could not get near the cart, for the road down to Holloway's, on which it moved steadily without ever approaching, was stopped up. But I rode right under the limb on which the other man hung, and there he was just above my head. I reasoned with myself, but in vain. There he still hung silent and limp, swinging gently in the night wind and turning a little back and forth at the end of the white rope.

“In sheer determination to fight it through I got off my horse and picked up my stirrup. He was trembling like a leaf. I remounted and rode back to the spot and looked again, confident that the spectres would now have disappeared. But there they were, old Joel, sitting in his cart, bowing to me civilly with timid, sad, friendly eyes, as much alive as I was, and the dead man, with his limp head and arms and his toes turned in, hanging in mid-air.

“I rode up under the dangling body and cut at it with my switch. At the motion my horse

BRED IN THE BONE

bolted. He ran fully a mile before I could pull him in.

“The next morning I went to my stable to get my horse to ride to the polls. The man at the stable said:

“ ‘He ain’t fit to take out, sir. You must ’a’ gi’n him a mighty hard ride last night—he won’t tetch a moufful; he ’s been in a cold sweat all night.’

“Sure enough, he looked it.

“I took another horse and rode out by Halloway’s to see the place by daylight.

“It was quiet enough now. The sycamore shaded the grass-grown track, and a branch, twisted and broken by some storm, hung by a strip of bark from the big bough that stretched across the road above my head, swaying, with limp leaves, a little in the wind; a dense dogwood bush in full bloom among the young pines, filled a fence-corner down the disused road where old Joel had bowed to me from his phantom cart the night before. But it was hard to believe that these were the things which had created such impressions on my mind—as hard to believe as that the quiet cottage peering out from amid the mass of peach-bloom on the other slope was one hour the home of such happi-

THE SPECTRE IN THE CART

ness, and the next the scene of such a tragedy.”

Once more he put his hand suddenly before his face as though to shut out something from his vision.

“Yes, I have seen apparitions,” he said, thoughtfully, “but I have seen what was worse.”

THE SHERIFF'S BLUFF

THE SHERIFF'S BLUFF

I

THE county of H—— was an old Colonial county, and even as late as the time of my story contained many Colonial relics. Among them were the court-house and the jail, and, at that time, the Judge and the Sheriff.

The court-house was an old brick edifice of solemn and grayish brown, with a portico whose mighty columns might have stood before a temple of Minerva overlooking the Ægean Sea. With its thick walls and massive barred windows, it might have been thought the jail, until one saw the jail. The jail once seen stood alone. A cube of stone, each block huge enough to have come from the Pyramid of Cheops; the windows, or rather the apertures, were small square openings, crossed and recrossed with great bars of wrought iron, so massive that they might have been fashioned on the forge of the Cyclops. Looking through them from

BRED IN THE BONE

the outside, one saw just deep enough into the narrow cavern to see another iron grating, and catch a suspicion of the darkness beyond. The entrance was but a slit letting into a stone-paved corridor on which opened the grinding iron doors of the four small cells, each door a grate of huge iron bars, heavily crossed, with openings just large enough to admit a hand. The jail was built, not to meet the sentimental or any other requirements of a reasonable and humane age, but in that hard time when crime was reckoned crime, when the very names of "gaol" and "prison" stood for something clear and unmistakable.

The Judge of the circuit was himself a relic of the past, for his youth had been cast among those great ones of the earth whose memory had come down coupled with deeds so heroic and far-reaching, that even to the next generation the actors appeared half enveloped and magnified in the halo of tradition. His life had been one of high rectitude and dignity, to which habits of unusual studiousness and a great work on Executors had added a reputation for vast learning, and in his old age both in his manner and his habit he preserved a distance and a dignity of demeanor which lent dignity to the

THE SHERIFF'S BLUFF

Bar, and surrounded him wherever he went with a feeling akin to awe. Though he had given up the queue and short clothes, he still retained ruffles, or what was so closely akin to them that the difference could scarcely be discerned. Tall, grave, and with a little bend, not in the shoulders but in the neck; with white hair just long enough to be brushed behind in a way to suggest the knot which had once appeared at the back; with calm, quiet eyes under bushy white eyebrows; a face of pinkish red inherited from Saxon ancestors, who once lived in the sun and on the brine, and a mouth and chin which bespoke decision and self-respect in every line and wrinkle, wherever he moved he produced an impression of one who had survived from a preceding age. Moreover, he was a man of heroic ideals, of Spartan simplicity, and of inflexible discipline.

If he had a weakness it was his susceptibility to feminine testimony.

The county was a secluded one—a fitting field for such a judge. And the great meetings of the year were the sessions of the Circuit Court.

The Judge's name was then on every lip, and his passage to the court-house was a procession.

BRED IN THE BONE

Everyone except those unfortunates who had come under his ban, or might be too far gone in drink to venture into his presence, drew up along the path from the tavern to bow to him and receive his courteous bow in return as he passed with slow and thoughtful step along, preceded by the Sheriff and his deputies, and followed by the Bar and "the multitude."

Whenever he entered the court or rose from the bench the lawyers stood.

If he was impressive off the bench, on the bench he was imposing.

At heart one of the kindest of men, he added to great natural dignity a high sense of the loftiness of a position on the bench and preserved, with impartial and inflexible rigor, the strictest order in his court, ruling bar and attendants alike up to a high accountability.

No one would any more have thought of taking a liberty with Judge Lomax than he would have done it with an old lion. Just one man, possibly, might have thought of it, but he would not have done it—and this was Aleck Thompson, the Sheriff of the county, a jovial man past middle age, a rubicund bachelor, who had courted half the girls in the county and was intimate with more than half the people in the



T. R. R. N. S. M. 1902

Drew up along the path from the tavern to bow to him.

THE SHERIFF'S BLUFF

circuit. He was daring even to rashness. He had held the office of Sheriff—not so long, perhaps, as the Judge had sat on the bench, but, at least, since he first stood for the place; and he could hold it as long as he wished it. He was easily the most popular man in the county. He treated everybody with unvarying joviality and indiscriminate generosity, and it was known that his income, though large, was, except so much as was absolutely necessary for his support, distributed with impartial fairness among the people of his county, a part over the poker-table, a part over the bar, and the balance in other popular ways. He had a face that no one could read, and bluffed as well with a pair of treys as with four aces. But he used to say that such a bluff was to be used rarely, and only on important occasions.

Now and then some opposition to him would arise and a small headway would be made against him. As, for instance, after he advised Squire Jefford's plump and comely daughter, Mary, not to marry Dick Creel, because Dick was too dissipated. There were some who said that the Sheriff had designs himself on Sam Jefford's buxom, black-eyed daughter, while others held that he was afraid of young Dick,

BRED IN THE BONE

who was an amiable and popular young fellow, and that he did not want him to get too much influence in the lower end of the county. However it was, Mary Jefford not only married her young lover, but sobered him, and as she was young, pretty, and ambitious, and worshipped her husband, Dick Creel at the next election, to use the vernacular, "made cornsideruble show runnin' ag'inst the Sheriff, and give him cornsideruble trouble." Still, Thompson was elected overwhelmingly, and few people believed Mary Creel's charge that the Sheriff had got Dick drunk on purpose to beat him. Thompson said, "Did n't anybody have to *git* Dick drunk—the work was t'other way."

II

The session of the Circuit Court in the "—— year of the Commonwealth," as the writs ran, and "in the sixteenth year of Aleck Thompson's Sheriffalty," as that official used to say, was more than usually important. The noted case of "*Dolittle et al. vs. Dolittle's Executrix*" was tried at the autumn term of the court, and caused considerable excitement in the

THE SHERIFF'S BLUFF

county; for, in addition to the amount of property and the nice questions of law which were involved, the two sides had been severally espoused by two sister churches, and nearly half the county was in attendance, either as witnesses or interested spectators. Not only was every available corner in the little village filled to overflowing with parties, witnesses, and their adherents, but during the first week of the term the stable yards and road-sides were lined with covered wagons and other vehicles, in or under which some of those who had not been fortunate enough to obtain shelter in the inn used to sleep, and "Briles's bar" under the tavern did a thriving business.

As the case, however, wore on, and the weather became inclement, the crowd dropped off somewhat, though a sufficient number still remained to give an air of life to the little roadside village.

Certain of these visitors found the bar-room on the ground floor of the tavern across the road more attractive than the court-room, and as evening came the loud talking in that direction told that the visits had not been fruitless.

Perfect order, however, prevailed in the court, until one evening one of these visitors, a young man named Turkle, who had been

BRED IN THE BONE

spending the afternoon at the bar, made his way into the court-room. He was clad in a dingy, weather-stained overcoat and an old slouch hat. He sank into a seat at the end of a bench near the door and, being very drunk, soon began to talk aloud to those about him.

“Silence!” called the Sheriff over the heads of the crowd from his desk in front, and those near the man cautioned him to stop talking. A moment later, however, he began again. Again the Sheriff roared “Silence!” But by this time the hot air of the court-room had warmed up Mr. Turkle, and in answer to the warning of those about him, he declared in a maudlin tone, that he “Warn’t goin’ to keep silence.”

“I got ’s much right to talk ’s anyone, and I ’m a goin’ to talk ’s much ’s I please.”

His friends tried to silence him, and the Sheriff made his way through the crowd and endeavored to induce him to leave the court-room. But it was to no purpose. Jim Turkle was much too “far gone” to know what he was doing, though he was in a delightfully good humor. He merely hugged the Sheriff and laughed drunkenly.

“Aleck, you jist go ’way f’om here. I ain’t a-goin’ to shet up. You shet up yourself. I ’m a-goin’ to talk all I please. Now, you hear it.”

THE SHERIFF'S BLUFF

Then as if to atone for his rudeness, he caught the Sheriff roughly by the arm and pulled him toward him:

"Aleck, how 's the case goin'? Is Mandy a goin' to win? Is that old rascal rulin' right? "

The Sheriff urged something in a low voice, but Turkle would not be silenced.

"Now you see thar," he broke out with a laugh to those about him, "did n't I tell you Aleck wa' n't nothin' but a' ol' drunkard? What d' you s'pose the ol' rascal wants me to do? He wants me to go over there to the bar and git drunk like 'im, and I ain't goin' to do it. I never drink. I 've come here to see that my cousin Mandy's chil'ern gits their patrimony, and I ain' a goin' to 'sociate with these here drunken fellows like Aleck Thompson."

The Sheriff made a final effort. He spoke positively, but Turkle would not heed.

"Oh, 'Judge' be damned! You and I know that ol' fellow loves a dram jest 's well 's the best of 'em—jest 's well 's you do. Look at his face. You think he got that drinkin' well-water? Bet yer he 's got a bottle in 's pocket right now."

A titter ran through the crowd, but was suddenly stopped.

A quiet voice was heard from the other end

BRED IN THE BONE

of the court-room, and a deathly silence fell on the assemblage.

“Suspend for a moment, gentlemen, if you please. Mr. Sheriff, bring that person to the bar of the Court.”

The crowd parted as if by magic, and the Sheriff led his drunken constituent to the bar, where his befuddled brain took in just enough of the situation to make him quiet enough. The Judge bent his sternest look on him until he quailed.

“Have you no more sense of propriety than to disturb a court of justice in the exercise of its high function?”

Turkle, however, was too drunk to understand this. He tried to steady himself against the bar.

“I ain’t is-turbed no Court of function, and anybody ’t says so, Jedge, iz a liar.” He dragged his hand across his mouth and tried to look around upon the crowd with an air of drunken triumph, but he staggered and would have fallen had not the Sheriff caught and supported him.

The Judge’s eyes had never left him.

“Mr. Sheriff, take this intoxicated creature and confine him in the county gaol until the ex-

THE SHERIFF'S BLUFF

piration of the term. The very existence of a court of justice depends upon the observance of order. Order must be preserved and the dignity of the Court maintained."

There was a stir—half of horror—throughout the court-room. Put a man in that jail just for being tight!

Then the Sheriff on one side and his deputy on the other, led the culprit out, now sufficiently quiet and half whimpering. A considerable portion of the crowd followed him.

Outside, the prisoner was sober enough, and he begged hard to be let off and allowed to go home. His friends, too, joined in his petition and promised to guarantee that he would not come back again during the term of court. But the Sheriff was firm.

"No. The Judge told me to put you in jail and I 'm goin' to do it." He took two huge iron keys from his deputy and rattled them fiercely.

Turkle shrank back with horror.

"You ain't goin' to put me in thar, Aleck! Not in that hole! Not just for a little drop o' whiskey. It was *your* whiskey, too, Aleck. I was drinkin' yo' health, Aleck. You know I was."

"The Judge won't know anything about it.

BRED IN THE BONE

He 'll never think of it again," pleaded several of Turkle's friends. "You know he has ordered a drunken man put there before and never said any more about it—just told you to discharge him next day."

Turkle stiffened up with hope.

"Yes, Aleck." He leaned on the Sheriff's arm heavily. "He 's drunk himself—I don't mean that, I mean *you 're* drunk—oh, no—I mean *I 'm* drunk. Everybody 's drunk."

"Yes, you 've gone and called me a drunkard before the Court. Now I 'm goin' to show you." Thompson rattled his big keys again savagely.

Turkle caught him with both hands.

"Oh, Aleck, don't talk that a-way," he pleaded in a tremulous voice. "Don't talk that a-way!" He burst into tears and flung his arms around the Sheriff's neck. He protested that he had never seen him take a drink in his life; he would go and tell the Judge so; if necessary, he would swear to it on a Bible.

"Aleck, you know I love you better than anybody in this world—except my wife and children. Yes, better than them—better than Jinny. Jinny will tell you that herself. Oh! Aleck!" He clung to him and sobbed!

His friends indorsed this and declared that

THE SHERIFF'S BLUFF

they would bring him back if the Judge demanded his presence. They would "promise to bring him back dead or alive at any time he sent for him."

As Turkle and his friends were always warm supporters of the Sheriff, a fact of which they did not fail to remind him, Thompson was not averse to letting him off, especially as he felt tolerably sure that the Judge would, as they said, forget all about the matter, or, if he remembered it, would, as he had done before, simply order him to discharge the prisoner. So, after dragging the culprit to the jail door to scare him well and make his clemency the more impressive, he turned him over to the others on condition that he would mount his mule and go straight home and not come back again during the term. This Turkle was so glad to do that he struck out at once for the stable at what Thompson called a "turkey trot," and five minutes later he was galloping down the road, swinging mightily on his sorrel mule, but whipping for life.

That night Thompson was much toasted about the court-house for his humanity. Several of his admirers, indeed, got into somewhat the same condition that Turkle had been in.

BRED IN THE BONE

Even Dick Creel, who had come to court that day, lapsed from virtue and fell a victim to the general hilarity.

III

THE next morning when court was opened, the Judge was even more than usually dignified and formal. The customary routine of the morning was gone through with; the orders of the day before were read and were signed by the Judge with more than wonted solemnity. The Clerk, a benignant-looking old man with a red face and a white beard, took up his book and adjusted his glasses to call the pending docket: the case of "*Dolittle vs. Dolittle's Ex'ex.*," and the array of counsel drew their chairs up to the bar and prepared for the work of the day, when the Judge, taking off his spectacles, turned to the Sheriff's desk.

"Mr. Sheriff, bring in that unfortunate inebriate whom I sentenced to confinement in the gaol yesterday. The Court, while sensible of the imperative necessity of protecting itself from all unseemly disorder and preserving its dignity undiminished, nevertheless always leans

THE SHERIFF'S BLUFF

to the side of mercy. The Court trusts that a night's incarceration may have sufficiently sobered and chastened the poor creature. The Court will therefore give him a brief admonition and will then discharge him."

The Judge sat back in his large arm-chair and waited benignantly with his gaze resting placidly in front of him, while a deathly silence fell on the crowd and every eye in the court-house was turned on the Sheriff.

Thompson, standing at his desk, was staring at the Judge with jaw dropped and a dazed look like a man who had suddenly to face judgment. He opened his lips twice as if to speak, then turned and went slowly out of the court-house like a man in a dream, while those left behind looked in each other's eyes, some half scared and others more than half amused.

Outside, Thompson stopped just between two of the great pillars. He rammed his hands deep in his pockets and gazed vacantly over the court-green and up the road.

"What will he do with you? Remove you?" asked two or three friends who had slipped out of the door behind him and now stood about him.

"He 'll put me in jail—*and* remove me."

BRED IN THE BONE

“Can’t you go and get Jim back here?”

“Or put a man on a horse and send for him?” suggested a second. “You can get a man to go there for a dollar and a half.”

“No, he can’t do that,” declared another, half testily; “it ’s over twenty-five miles to Jim’s, and like as not, Jim’s drunk at home. He would n’t get here till to-morrow night.”

“Aleck, you tell him he was sick. I reckon he is sick enough, drunk as he was,” suggested the last speaker in a friendly tone; but the first dashed his hope.

“Next thing, the Judge would be sendin’ the Doctor to see about him and askin’ him how he is comin’ on—if he did n’t go and see how he is comin’ on himself.”

“Jee-rusalem! that would be bad!”

Thompson’s face had not changed a whit. He had still stood and looked as if in a dream. Suddenly, as his eyes rested on the tavern across the road beyond the court-green they lit up. His friends followed his gaze. A young man had just come out of the tavern bar and was making his way unsteadily across the road toward a horse-rack, where a thin bay horse stood tied. He was clad in a sun-burnt overcoat and slouch hat, much as Turkle had been dressed the evening before.

THE SHERIFF'S BLUFF

"There 's Turkle now!" exclaimed one of the men behind Thompson.

"No; it 's Dick Creel," corrected another. He ain't been drunk before in a year. He 's goin' home now."

"Sorry for him when he gits home. His wife will straighten him out."

But Thompson paid no heed to them. He darted down the walk and pounced on the young man just as he reached his horse.

"Come here," he said in a tone of authority. "The Judge wants you."

Creel looked at him in vague amazement.

"The Judge wants me? What th' Judge want with me? 'S he want to consult me?"

"Never mind what he wants—he *wants* you. Come along, and mind, no matter what he says to you, don't you open your mouth. If you do he 'll put you in jail. He 's been kind o' curious lately about all this drinkin' and he 's in an all-fired fury this morning and he 'll clap you in jail in a minute. Come along."

The young man was too much dazed to understand, and Thompson was hurrying him along so rapidly that he had no time to expostulate. At every step the Sheriff was warning him, under terrific penalties, against answering the Judge a single word.

BRED IN THE BONE

“No matter if he says black ’s white and white ’s black, don’t you open your mouth or you ’ll get it. It ’s much as I can do to keep you out of jail this minute.”

“But, Sheriff—! But, Aleck—! Just wait a minute! I don’t——”

The next instant he was inside the courthouse and the Sheriff was marching him up the aisle between the upturned faces. He planted him at the bar immediately before the Court, pulling off his hat in such a way as to drag his hair over his face and give him an even more dishevelled appearance than before. Then he moved around to his own desk, keeping his eye fixed piercingly on the astonished Creel’s bewildered face. A gasp went over the court-room, and the Bar stared at the prisoner in blank amazement.

The Judge alone appeared oblivious of his presence. He had sat absolutely silent and motionless since he had given the order to the Sheriff to produce the prisoner, his face expressive of deep reflection. Now he withdrew his eye from the ceiling.

“Oh!”

With impressive deliberation he put on his large gold-rimmed spectacles; sat up in his chair; assumed his most judicial expression,

THE SHERIFF'S BLUFF

which sat curiously on his benignant face, and looked severely down upon the culprit. The court-room shivered and Thompson's round face grew perceptibly whiter; but his eyes, after a single glance darted at the Judge, never left the face of the man at the bar.

The next second the Judge began to speak, and Thompson, and the court-room with him, heaved a deep sigh of relief.

"Young man," said the Judge, "you have committed an act of grievous impropriety. You have been guilty of one of the most reprehensible offences that any citizen of a Commonwealth founded upon order and justice could commit, an act of such flagrant culpability that the Court, in the maintenance of its dignity and in the interest of the Commonwealth found it necessary to visit upon you punishment of great severity and incarcerate you in the gaol usually reserved for the most depraved malefactors. Intemperance is one of the most debasing of vices. It impairs the intellect and undermines the constitution. To the inhibition of Holy Writ is added the cumulative if inferential prohibition of the Law, which declines to consider inebriety, though extreme enough in degree to impair if not destroy the reasoning faculty, in mitigation of crime of the highest

BRED IN THE BONE

dignity. If you had no beloved family to whom your conduct would be an affliction, yet you have a duty to yourself and to the Commonwealth which you have flagrantly violated. To shocking inebriety you added the even grosser misdemeanor of disturbing a Court in the exercise of its supreme function: the calm, orderly, and deliberate administration of justice between the citizens of the Commonwealth."

"But, Judge—?" began the young man.

A sharp cough from the Sheriff interrupted him and he glanced at the Sheriff to meet a menacing shake of the head.

The strangeness of the scene and the impressive solemnity of the Judge so wrought upon the young man that he began to whimper. He looked at the Judge and once more opened his mouth to speak, but the Sheriff, called, sharply:

"Silence!"

Creel glanced appealingly from the Judge to the Sheriff, only to meet another imperative shake of the latter's head and a warning scowl. Then the Judge proceeded, in a tone that showed that he was not insensible to his altered manner.

"The Court, always mindful of that mercy whose quality 'is not strained, but droppeth as

THE SHERIFF'S BLUFF

the gentle rain from heaven upon the place beneath,' trusts that your recent incarceration, though brief, may prove adequate to the exigencies of the occasion. It hopes that the incarceration of one night in the common gaol may prove in case of a young man like yourself sufficiently efficacious to deter you from the repetition of so grave a misdemeanor, and at the same time not crush too much that generous spirit of youth which in its proper exercise may prove so advantageous to its possessor, and redound so much to the benefit of the Commonwealth. The order of the Court, therefore, is that the Sheriff discharge you from further imprisonment.

"Mr. Sheriff, conduct the young man to the door, caution him against a recurrence of his offence, and direct him toward his home.

"We will now proceed to call the docket."

The court-room with another gasp broke into a buzz, which was instantly quelled by the sharp command of the Sheriff for silence and order in the court.

"But, Judge—" began Creel again, "I don't understand—"

What he did not understand was not heard, for Thompson seized the prisoner before he

BRED IN THE BONE

could finish his sentence, and, with a grip of steel on his arm, hustled him down the aisle and out of the court-room.

A good many persons poured out of the court-room after them and with subdued laughter followed the Sheriff and his charge across the green. Thompson, however, did not wait for them. The young man appeared inclined to argue. But the Sheriff gave him no time. Hurrying him down the walk, he unhitched his horse for him and ordered him to mount.

"But, Sheriff—Mr. Thompson, I 'm darned if I understand what it is all about."

"You were drunk," said Thompson—"flagrantly inebriated. Go home. Did n't you hear the Judge?"

"Yes, I heard him. He 's doty. I might have been drunk, but I 'm darned if I slept in jail last night—I slept in——"

"I 'm darned if you did n't," said the Sheriff. "The Judge has ruled it so, and so you did. Now go home and don't you come back here again during this term, or you will sleep in jail again."

"That old Judge is doty," declared the young man with a tone of conviction.

"So much the worse for you if you come back

THE SHERIFF'S BLUFF

here. Go home now, just as quick as you can."

Creel reflected for a moment.

"Well, it beats my time. I 'll tell you what I 'll do, Mr. Thompson," he said, half pleadingly. "I 'll go home and stay there if you will promise not to tell my wife I was in jail."

"I promise you," said Aleck, solemnly. "I give you my word I won't."

"And what 's more," continued Creel, "if you 'll keep anybody else from doing it, I 'll vote for you next time for Sheriff."

"I promise you that, too," said Aleck, "and if anybody says you were there, let me know, and I 'll come up there and—and tell her you were n't. I can't do any more than that, can I?"

"No, you can't do any more than that," admitted Creel, sadly, and, leaning over and shaking hands with the Sheriff cordially for the first time in some years, he rode away in profound dejection.

"Well, I 've got to face Mary," he said, "and I reckon I might as well do it. Whiskey is a queer thing. I must have been a lot drunker than I thought I was, because if the Court had n't ruled it, I would have sworn I slept in that there wing room last night."

BRED IN THE BONE

“Well, that ’s the best bluff I ever put up,” said Thompson to the throng about him as he turned back to the court-house.

The Sheriff’s bluff became the topic of the rest of the term. Such audacity, such resourcefulness had never been known. Thompson became more popular than ever, and his re-election the following spring was admitted to be certain.

“That Aleck Thompson ’s the smartest man that is,” declared one of his delighted adherents.

Thompson himself thought so, too, and his imitation of the Judge, of Dick Creel, and of himself in court became his most popular story.

Only the old Judge moved among the throng of tittering laymen calm, dignified, and unsuspecting.

“If ever he gets hold of you, Aleck,” said one of that worthy’s worshippers, “there ’s likely to be a vacancy in the office of sheriff.”

“He ’ll put me in jail,” laughed Aleck. “Dick Creel says he ’s kind o’ doty.”

THE SHERIFF'S BLUFF

IV

THE Court was nearing the end of the term, *Dolittle et al. vs. Dolittle's Executrix*, with all its witnesses and all its bitternesses, had resulted in a mistrial, and the sister churches were wider apart than ever. The rest of the docket was being daily disposed of.

The Sheriff was busy one day telling his story to an admiring throng on the court-green when someone casually observed that Mrs. Dick Creel had got off the train that morning.

The Sheriff's face changed a little.

"Where is she?"

"Waitin' in the tavern parlor."

"What is she doing here? What is she doing in there?"

"Jest a settin' and a waitin'."

"I 'spect she is waitin' for you, Aleck?" hazarded one of his friends.

There was a burst of laughter, for Squire Jefford's daughter, Mary, was known to be "a woman of her own head."

The Sheriff laughed, too; but his laughter was not as mirthful as usual. He made an ineffectual attempt to keep up his jollity.

BRED IN THE BONE

"I reckon I 'll go and see Mary," he said at length.

He left the group with affected cheerfulness, but his heart was heavier than he liked to admit. He made his way to the "ladies' parlor," as the little sitting-room in the south wing of the rambling old tavern, overlooking the court-green was called, and opened the door.

On one side of the wood fire, in a stiff, high-backed chair sat a young woman, in her hat and wrap and gloves, "jest a settin' and a waitin'." She was a well-made and comely young woman under thirty, with a ruddy face, smooth hair and bright eyes that the Sheriff knew could both smile and snap. Her head was well set on rather plump shoulders; her mouth was well formed, but was now close drawn, and her chin was strong enough to show firmness—too much firmness, as Thompson mentally decided when he caught its profile.

The Sheriff advanced with an amiable smile. He was so surprised.

"Why, you here, Mary! When did you come?" His tone was affable and even testified pleasure. But Mary did not unbend. She was as stiff as the chair she sat in. Without turning her head she turned her eyes and looked at him sideways.

THE SHERIFF'S BLUFF

"*Mrs. Creel.*"

There was a glint in her black eyes that meant war, and Thompson's countenance fell.

"Ah—ur—*Mrs. Creel.*"

"I did n't know as you 'd know me?" She spoke quietly, her eyes still on him sidewise.

"Not know you! Why, of course, I know you. I don't forget the pretty girls—leastways, the prettiest girl in the county. Your father and I——"

"I heard you made a mistake about my husband and Jim Turkle. I thought maybe you might think I was *Mrs. Turkle.*"

There was the least perceptible lifting of her shoulders and drawing down of her mouth, but quite enough to suggest Jenny Turkle's high shoulders and grim face.

The Sheriff tried to lighten the conversation.

"Oh! Come now, Mary, you must n't get mad about that. It was all a joke. I was comin' right up after court adjourned to tell you about it—and—. It was the funniest thing! You 'd 'a' died laughing if you 'd been here and seen——"

"I heard they was all laughin' about it. *I ain't* so easy to amuse."

"Oh! Yes, you would, too," began Thompson, cajolingly. "If you 'd seen——"

BRED IN THE BONE

“What time does Court adjourn?” she asked, quietly and irrelevantly.

“Oh, not for two or three—not for *several* days yet—Probably ’t will hold over till well into next week. But if you ’d seen——”

“I mean what time does it let out *to-day*?”

Thompson’s face fell again.

“Why—ah—about—ah— Why? What do you want to know for?”

“I want to see the Judge.” Her voice was dead level.

“What about?”

“About business?”

“What business?”

“*Co’t*e business,” with cold irony.

“You don’t mean that you ’re goin’ to——?”

He paused without framing the rest of the question.

She suddenly stood up and flamed out.

“Yes, I am—that ’s just what I am goin’ to do. That ’s what I ’ve come here for. You may take a liberty with the Judge—he ’s doty; but you can’t take a liberty with *me*—I ’m Squire Jefford’s daughter, and I ’m goin’ to show you.”

She was facing him now, and her black eyes were darting fire. Thompson was quite staggered.

THE SHERIFF'S BLUFF

“Why, Mary! I am surprised at you. Your father’s old friend—who has had you on his knee many a time. I am shocked and surprised—and mortified and—astonished—and mortified——”

“You ’ve done said that one once,” she said, icily.

“Why, Mary, I thought we were friends——” he began. But she cut in on him.

“Friends!” She spoke with contempt. “You ’ve had it in for Dick ever since he was a boy.” Her voice suddenly broke and the tears sprang to her eyes and rolled down her cheeks.

“Why, Mary—no such thing—I assure you—Dick and I are the best of friends—*dear* friends.”

Her sniff was more forcible than words. She wiped her eyes and looked at him with freezing contempt.

“I ’m a fool! And I don’t want you to be *Mary-in’* me, either. If Dick chooses to let you get him drunk and make a beast and a fool of him and drag him up before the Court like a—a—like that drunkard, Jim Turkle, what don’t know how to behave himself seemly in Court, and Circuit Court at that—he may; but I ’ll let you know, *I ’m* not goin’ to do it. I don’t

BRED IN THE BONE

mean the Judge to think my husband's a thing like that. I mean to set him right. And I 'll tell him you are nothing but an old gambler who spends your time ruinin' young men, and braggin' as how you can bluff anybody."

"Mary!—ur—Mrs. Creel!" gasped the Sheriff.

She stalked by him wiping her eyes, and marched straight to the door; but the Sheriff was too quick for her. His office, his reputation, everything hung on his pacifying her. He sprang to the door and, standing with his back against it, began to apologize in so humble a tone that even the angry wife could not but listen to him.

He said everything that any mortal could have said, and declared that he would do anything on earth that she might ask.

She reflected, and he began to hope again. When their eyes met, hers were still hard, but they were calmer.

"I know you think you are making a fool of me," she began, and then as he protested she shut him up with a sharp gesture.

"Yes, you do, you think so; but you are not. There is but one thing I will accept in apology."

THE SHERIFF'S BLUFF

"What is that?"

"You are to make Dick your deputy."

"But, M——"

"I knew you would n't. Stand aside." She gave a sweep of the arm.

"But, Mary!"

"Stand aside, I say—I 'd rather have you removed anyway."

"But, Mary, just listen——"

"Stand aside, or I will call." She straightened herself and looked past him, as if listening.

"But, Mary, do be reasonable!"

She opened her mouth as if to cry out. The Sheriff threw up both hands.

"Mary, please—For kingdom's sake, don't! What unreasonable creatures women are!"

"You 'd better let women alone. One is as much as you can manage now." She spoke witheringly. "I give you one more chance."

"More than I can manage. You know Dick will get drunk——"

"Not unless you make him. Who was drunk at that barbecue at Jones's Cross Roads last summer?"

"Oh, Mary!"

BRED IN THE BONE

“Who set up till after Sunday mornin’ playin’ kyards—. Yes, *gamblin’* the last night of last County Co’té?”

“Oh, Mary!—All right. I lay down my hand.”

She drew paper and pencil from her little bag and held them out to him.

“Write it down.”

“Ain’t my word good enough?”

“If you mean to do it, why are you afraid to write it?”

“I ’m not afraid.”

“Then write it.” She held the paper to him with outstretched arm.

“What shall I write?”

“Write what I say: ‘I, Aleck Thompson, promise and bind myself if I remain in office for another term to appoint my *dear* friend, Dick Creel’—underscore that—‘my first deputy, and to keep him in as long as he keeps sober and attends to his business.’ Now sign it.”

“What consideration do I get for this?” Thompson looked up from the paper at her cajolingly. She met his gaze with a little flash.

“Oh! I forgot the consideration,” she murmured, “and I Squire Jefford’s daughter, too!”

“Write: ‘The consideration for the above is the love I bear the aforesaid Richard Creel, and

THE SHERIFF'S BLUFF

the fear I have that his wife will tell the Judge what a smart Aleck I am.' "

"Mary, you don't want me to write that?"

"Them very words. I little more forgot the consideration."

The paper was written.

She glanced out of the window.

"Now I want a witness. I see the court is broken up."

" 'Tain't necessary."

"I want a witness, and I 'm goin' to *have* him."

"Who?"

"The Judge."

"Look here, Mary——"

"I 'm goin' to have him. You come and introduce me."

"Mary, are you after all goin' to——"

She met his gaze frankly.

"No—unless you go back on me. If you do, I 'll tell him and show him the paper; and what 's more, I 'll show it all around this county."

A flash of genuine admiration sprang into the Sheriff's eyes.

"Mary, you ought to have been a man, or—Mrs. Aleck Thompson."

The paper was signed and witnessed.

BRED IN THE BONE

The Judge inquired of the Sheriff that evening:

“Who is that handsome and very interesting young woman?”

“She is the wife of a young man I want to get as my deputy, sir.”

“A very interesting young woman,” observed the Judge, gravely, “I should say she is a young woman of some intellect and considerable determination.”

“She is, indeed, sir!” said the Sheriff.

Long afterward Aleck Thompson used to tell the story and always wound up with, “I thought I could put up a good bluff; but Mary Creel beat me. She bluffed me clean. But she was the best deputy I ever had.”

THE LONG HILLSIDE

A CHRISTMAS HARE-HUNT IN OLD VIRGINIA

THE LONG HILLSIDE

A CHRISTMAS HARE-HUNT IN OLD VIRGINIA

I

THERE do not seem to be as many hares now as there used to be when I was a boy. Then the "old fields" and branch-bottoms used to be full of them. They were peculiarly our game; I mean we used to consider that they belonged to us boys. They were rather scorned by the "gentlemen," by which was meant the grown-up gentlemen, who shot partridges over the pointers, and only picked up a hare when she got in their way. And the negroes used to catch them in traps or "gums," which were traps made of hollow gum-tree logs. But we boys were the hare-hunters. They were our property from our childhood; just as much, we considered, as "Bruno" and "Don," the beautiful "crack" pointers, with their brown eyes and satiny ears and coats, were "the gentlemen's."

BRED IN THE BONE

The negroes used to set traps all the Fall and Winter, and we, with the natural tendency of boys to imitate whatever is wild and primitive, used to set traps also. To tell the truth, however, the hares appeared to have a way of going into the negroes' traps, rather than into ours, and the former caught many to our one.

Even now, after many years, I can remember the delight of the frosty mornings; the joy with which we used to peep through the little panes of the dormer-windows at the white frost over the fields, which promised stronger chances of game being caught; the eagerness with which, oblivious of the cold, we sped through the garden, across the field, along the ditch banks, and up by the woods, making the round of our traps; the expectancy with which we peeped over the whitened weeds and through the bushes, to catch a glimpse of the gums in some "parf" or at some clearly marked "gap"; our disappointment when we found the door standing open and the trigger set just as we had left it the morning before; our keen delight when the door was down; the dash for the trap; the scuffle to decide which should look in first; the peep at the brown ball screwed up back at the far end; the delicate operation of getting the hare out of the trap;

THE LONG HILLSIDE

and the triumphant return home, holding up our spoil to be seen from afar. We were happier than we knew.

So far to show how we came to regard hares as our natural game, and how, though to be bird-hunters we had to grow up, we were hare-hunters as boys. The rush, the cheers, the yells, the excitement were a part of the sport, to us boys the best part.

Of course, to hunt hares we had to have dogs—at least boys must have—the noise, the dash, the chase are half the battle.

And such dogs as ours were!

It was not allowable to take bird-dogs after hares. I say it was not allowable; I do not say it was not done, for sometimes, of course, the pointers *would* come, and we could not make them go back. But the hare-dogs were the puppies and curs, terriers, watch-dogs, and the non-descript crew which belonged to the negroes, and to the plantation generally.

What a pack they were! Thin, undersized black-and-tans, or spotted beasts of doubtful breed, called “houn’s” by courtesy; long legged, sleepy watch-dogs from the “quarters,” brindled or “yaller” mongrels, which even courtesy could not term other than “kyur dogs”; sharp-voiced “fises,” busier than bees,

BRED IN THE BONE

hunting like fury, as if they expected to find rats in every tuft of grass; and, when the hares got up, bouncing and bobbing along, not much bigger than the "molly cottontails" they were after, getting in everyone's way and receiving sticks and stones in profusion, but with their spirits unbroken. And all these were in one incongruous pack, growling, running, barking, ready to steal, fight, or hunt, whichever it happened to be.

We used to have hunts on Saturdays, just we boys, with perhaps a black boy or two of our particular cronies; but the great hunt was "in the holidays"—that is, about Christmas. Then all the young darkies about the place were free and ready for sport.

This Christmas hunt was an event.

II

It was the year 186—, and, Christmas-day falling on a Sunday, Saturday was given as the first day of the holidays. It had been a fine Fall; the cover was good, and old hares were plentiful. It had been determined some time before Christ-

THE LONG HILLSIDE

mas that we would have a big hare-hunt on that day, and the "boys"—that is, the young darkies—came to the house from the quarters, prepared for the sport, and by the time breakfast was over they were waiting for us around the kitchen door.

Breakfast was always late about Christmas time; perhaps, the spareribs and sausages and the jelly dripping through a blanket hung over the legs of an upturned table accounted for it; and on this Christmas eve it was ten by the tall clock in the corner of the dining-room before we were through.

When we came out, the merry darkies were waiting for us, grinning and showing their shining teeth, laughing and shouting and calling the dogs. They were not allowed to have guns; but our guns, long old single-barrels handed down for at least two generations, had been carried out and cleaned, and they were handling them around, inspecting and aiming them with as much pride as if they had been brand-new. There was only one exception to this rule: Uncle "Limpy-Jack," so called because he had one leg shorter than the other, was allowed to have a gun. He was a sort of professional hunter about the place. No lord was ever prouder of

BRED IN THE BONE

a special privilege handed down in his family for generations.

The other boys were armed with stout sticks and made much noise. Uncle Limpy-Jack was in this respect also the only exception; he was grave as became a "man" who was a hunter by business, and "warn't arter no foolishness." He allowed no one to touch his gun, which thus possessed a special value. He carried his powder in a gourd and his shot in an old rag.

The pack of dogs I have described, fully recruited, were hanging around, growling and snarling, sneaking into the kitchen and being kicked out by Aunt Betty and her corps of varicolored assistants, largely augmented at the approach of Christmas with its cheer. The yelping of the mongrel pack, the shouts and whoops of the boys, and the laughter of the maids or men about the kitchen and back-yard, all in their best clothes and in high spirits, were exhilarating, and with many whoops and much "hollering," we climbed the yard fence, and, disdaining a road, of course, set out down the hill across the field, taking long strides, each one bragging loudly of what he would do.

Let me see: there were John and Andrew and Black Peter, and Bow-legged Saul, and Milker-

THE LONG HILLSIDE

Tim, and Billy, and Uncle Limpy-Jack, and others now forgotten, and the three white boys. And the dogs, "Ole Rattler," and "Ole Nimrod," who had always been old by their names, and were regarded with reverence akin to fetich-worship because they were popularly supposed to be able to trail a hare. It was a delusion, I am now satisfied; for I cannot recall that they ever trailed one certainly three feet. Then there were the "guard dawgs": "Hector," brindled, bob-tailed, and ugly, and "Jerry," yellow, long-tailed, and mean; then there was "Jack," fat, stumpy, and ill-natured; there were the two pointers, Bruno and Don, the beauties and pride of the family, with a pedigree like a prince's, who, like us, were taking a holiday hunt, but, unlike us, without permission; "Rock," Uncle Limpy-Jack's "hyah dawg," and then the two terriers "Snip" and "Snap."

We beat the banks of the spring ditch for form's sake, though there was small chance of a hare there, because it was pasture and the banks were kept clean. Then we made for the old field beyond, the dogs spreading out and nosing around lazily, each on his own hook. Whether because of the noise we made and their seeking safety in flight, or because they were off "taking

BRED IN THE BONE

holiday'' as the negroes claimed, no hares were found, and after a half-hour our ardor was a little dampened. But we soon set to work in earnest and began to beat a little bottom lying between two hills, through which ran a ditch, thickly grown up with bushes and briars. The dead swamp-grass was very heavy in the narrow little bottom along the sides, and was matted in tufts. The dogs were scattered, and prowling around singly or in couples; and only one of the pointers and Snip were really on the ditch. Snip showed signs of great industry, and went bobbing backward and forward through a patch of heavy matted grass. In any other dog this might have excited suspicion, even hope. There are, however, some dogs that are natural liars. Snip was one of them. Snip's failing was so well known that no attention was paid to him. He gave, indeed, a short bark, and bounced up two or three times like a trap-ball, looking both ways at once; but this action only called down upon him universal derision.

Just then, however, a small boy pointed over to the top of the hill calling, "Look-a yander,"

¹ The hares, according to the negroes, used to take holidays and would not go into traps in this season; so the only way to get them was by hunting them.

THE LONG HILLSIDE

and shouts arose, "Dyah she go!" "Dyah she go!" "Dyah she go!"

Sure enough, there, just turning the hill, went a "molly cotton," bouncing. In a second we were all in full chase and cry, shouting to each other, "whooping" on the dogs, and running with all our might. We were so carried away by the excitement that not one of us even thought of the fact that she would come stealing back.

No negro can resist the inclination to shout "Dyah she go!" and to run after a hare when one gets up; it is involuntary and irresistible. Even Uncle Limpy-Jack came bobbing along for a while, shouting, "Dyah she go!" at the top of his voice; but being soon distanced he called his dog, Rock, and went back to beat the ditch bank again.

The enthusiasm of the chase carried us all into the piece of pine beyond the fence, where the pines were much too thick to see anything and where only an occasional glimpse of a dog running backward and forward, or an instinctive "oun-oun!" from the hounds, rewarded us. But "molly is berry sly," and while the dogs were chasing each other around the pines, she was tripping back down through the field to the place where we had started her.

BRED IN THE BONE

We were recalled by hearing an unexpected "bang" from the field behind us, and dashing out of the woods we found Uncle Limpy-Jack holding up a hare, and with a face whose gravity might have done for that of Fate. He was instantly surrounded by the entire throng, whom he regarded with superb disdain and spoke of as "you chillern."

"G' on, you chillern, whar you is gwine, and meck you' noise somewhar else, an' keep out o' my way. I want to git some hyahs!"

He betrayed his pleasure only once, when, as he measured out the shot from an old rag into his seamed palm, he said with a nod of his head: "Y' all kin *run* ole hyahs; de ole man *shoots* 'em." And as we started off we heard him muttering:

"Ole Molly Hyah,
What yo' doin' dyah?
Settin' in de cornder
Smokin' a cigah."

We went back to the branch and began again to beat the bushes, Uncle Limpy-Jack taking unquestioned the foremost place, which had heretofore been held by us.

Suddenly there was a movement, a sort of

THE LONG HILLSIDE

scamper, a rush, as something slipped out of the heavy grass at our feet and vanished in the thick briars of the ditch bank. "Dyah she go!" arose from a dozen throats, and gone she was, in fact, safe in a thicket of briars which no dog nor negro could penetrate.

The bushes were vigorously beaten, however, and all of us, except Uncle Limpy-Jack and Milker-Tim, crossed over to the far side of the ditch where the bottom widened, when suddenly she was discovered over on the same side, on the edge of the little valley. She had stolen out, the negroes declared, licking her paws to prevent leaving a scent, and finding the stretch of hillside too bare to get across, was stealing back to her covert again, going a little way and then squatting, then going a few steps and squatting again. "Dyah she go!" Dyah she go!" resounded as usual.

Bang!—bang!—snap!—bang! went the four guns in quick succession, tearing up the grass anywhere from one to ten yards away from her. As if she had drawn their fire and was satisfied that she was safe, she turned and sped up the hill, the white tail bobbing derisively, followed by the dogs strung out in line.

Of course, all of us had some good excuse for

BRED IN THE BONE

missing, Uncle Limpy-Jack's being the only valid one—that his cap had snapped. He made much of this, complaining violently of “dese yere wuthless caps!” With a pin he set to work, and he had just picked the tube, rammed painfully some grains of powder down in it, and put on another cap which he had first examined with great care to impress us. “Now, let a ole hyah git up,” he said, with a shake of his head. “She got *man* ready for her, she ain’t got you chil-lern.” The words were scarcely spoken when a little darkey called out, “Dyah she come!” and sure enough she came, “lipping” down a furrow straight toward us. Uncle Limpy-Jack was on that side of the ditch and Milker-Tim was near him armed only with a stout well-balanced stick about two feet long. As the hare came down the hill, Uncle Jack brought up his gun, took a long aim and fired. The weeds and dust flew up off to one side of her, and she turned at right angles out of the furrow; but as she got to the top of the bed, Milker-Tim, flinging back his arm, with the precision of a bushman, sent his stick whirling like a boomerang skimming along the ground after her.

Tim with a yell rushed at her and picked her up, shouting, “I got her! I got her!”

THE LONG HILLSIDE

Then Uncle Limpy-Jack pitched into him:

“What you doin’ gittin’ in my way?” he complained angrily. “Ain’ you got no better sense ’n to git in my way like dat? Did n’ you see how nigh I come to blowin’ yo’ brains out? Did n’ you see I had de hyah when you come pokin’ yer woolly black head in my way? Ef I had n’ flung my gun off, whar ’d you ’a’ been now? Don’ you come pokin’ in my way ag’in!”

Tim was too much elated to be long affected by even this severity, and when he had got out of Uncle Jack’s way he sang out:

“Ole Molly Hyah,
You’ ears mighty thin.
Yes, yes, yes,
I come a-tippin’ thoo de win’!”

So far the honors were all Uncle Jack’s and Milker-Tim’s, and it was necessary for the rest of us to do something. Accordingly, the bottom having been well hunted, the crowd struck out for an old field over the hill, known as “the long hillside.” It was thick in hen-grass and broom-straw, and sloped down from a piece of pine with a southern exposure on which the sun shone warm. We had not reached it before a hare jumped out of a bush near Charlie. In a few moments, another bounced out before one of the

BRED IN THE BONE

dogs and went dashing across the field. Two shots followed her; but she kept on till at last one of the boys secured her.

We were going down the slope when Peter called in great excitement.

“Heah a ole hyah settin’ in her baid. Come heah, Dan, quick! Gi’ me your gun; le’ me git him!”

This was more than Dan bargained for, as he had not got one himself yet. He ran up quickly enough, but held on tightly to his gun.

“Where is he? Show him to me: I ’ll knock him over.”

As he would not give up the gun, Peter pointed out the game.

“See him?”

“No.”

“Right under dat bush—right dyah” (pointing). “See him? Teck keer dyah, Don, teck keer,” he called, as Don came to a point just beyond. “See him?” He pointed a black finger with tremulous eagerness.

No, Dan did not see, so he reluctantly yielded up the gun.

Peter took aim long and laboriously, shut both eyes, pulled the trigger, and blazed away.

There was a dash of white and brown, a yell,

THE LONG HILLSIDE

and Don wheeled around with his head between his forepaws stung by the shot as "molly" fled streaking it over the hill followed only by the dogs.

Peter's face was a study. If he had killed one of us he could not have looked more like a criminal, nor have heard more abuse.

Uncle Limpy-Jack poured out on him such a volume of vituperation and contempt that he was almost white, he was so ashy.

Don was not permanently hurt; but one ear was pierced by several shot, which was a serious affair, as his beauty was one of his good points, and his presence on a hare-hunt was wholly against the rules. Uncle Limpy-Jack painted the terrors of the return home for Peter with a vividness so realistic that its painfulness pierced more breasts than Peter's.

Don was carried to the nearest ditch, and the entire crowd devoted itself to doctoring his ear. It was decided that he should be taken to the quarters and kept out of sight during the Christmas, in the hope that his ear would heal. We all agreed not to say anything about it if not questioned. Uncle Limpy-Jack had to be bribed into silence by a liberal present of shot and powder from us. But he finally consented. However,

BRED IN THE BONE

when Met, in a wild endeavor to get a shot at a stray partridge which got up before us, missed the bird and let Uncle Limpy-Jack, at fifty yards, have number-six pellets in the neck and shoulder; Peter's delinquency was forgotten. The old man dropped his gun and yelled, "Oh! Oh!" at the top of his voice. "Oh!" I 'm dead, I 'm dead, I 'm dead." He lay down on the ground and rolled.

Met was scared to death and we were all seriously frightened. Limpy-Jack himself may have thought he was really killed. He certainly made us think so. He would not let anyone look at the wound.

Only a few of the shot had gone in, and he was not seriously injured, but he vowed that it was all done on purpose, and that he was "going straight home and tell Marster," a threat he was only prevented from executing by us all promising him the gold dollars which we should find in the toes of our stockings next morning.

III

So far the day had been rather a failure; the misfortunes had exceeded the sport; but as we

THE LONG HILLSIDE

reached the long hillside I have spoken of, the fun began. The hares were sunning themselves comfortably in their beds, and we had not gone more than two hundred yards before we had three up, and cutting straight down the hill before us.

Bang!—bang!—bang!—bang! went the guns. One hare was knocked over, and one boy also by the kick of his gun; the others were a sight chase, and every boy, man, and dog joined in it for dear life.

“Whoop!—whoop! Dyah she go! Dyah she go! Heah, heah! Heah, heah! Heah, heah, heah! Whoop, Rattler! Whoop, Nimrod! Heah, Snip! heah, heah, Bruno! Heah, heah!” Everyone was striving to get ahead.

Both hares were picked up before reaching cover, one being caught by Bruno, who was magnificent in a chase. After many falls and failures by all of us, Saul flung himself on the other, and gave a wild yell of triumph.

The “long hillside” was full of hares; they bounced out of the hen-grass; slipped from brush-heaps and were run down, or by their speed and agility escaped us all. The dogs got the frenzy and chased wildly, sometimes running over them and losing them through a clever

BRED IN THE BONE

double and dash. The old field rang with the chase until we turned our steps toward home to get ready for the fun after dark.

We were crossing the pasture on our way home. The winter sunset sky was glowing like burnished steel; the tops of the great clump of oaks and hickories in which the house stood were all that we could see over the far hill; a thin line of bluish smoke went straight up in the quiet air. The dogs had gone on ahead, even the two or three old watch-dogs ran after the others, with their noses in air.

The question of concealing Don and his ragged ears came up. It was necessary to catch him and keep him from the house. We started up the slope after him. As we climbed the hill we heard them.

“Dee got a ole hyah now; come on,” exclaimed one or two of the younger negroes; but old Limpy-Jack came to a halt, and turning his head to one side listened.

“Heish! Dat ain’ no ole hyah dey ’re arter; dey ’re arter Marster’s sheep—dat ’s what ’t is!”

He started off at a rapid gait. We did the same.

“Yep, yep! Oun, oun, oun! Err, err, err!” came their voices in full cry.

THE LONG HILLSIDE

We reached the top of the hill. Sure enough, there they were, the fat Southdowns, tearing like mad across the field, the sound of their trampling reaching us, with the entire pack at their heels, the pointers well in the lead. Such a chase as we had trying to catch that pack of mischievous dogs! Finally we got them in; but not before the whole occurrence had been seen at the house.

The shouts that were borne to us, as rescuers began to troop across the fields, drove our hearts down into our boots.

The return to the house was widely different from the triumph of the out-going in the morning. It was a dejected cortege that wended its toilsome way up the hill. Uncle Limpy-Jack basely deserted us after getting the promise of our gold dollars, declaring that he "told dem boys dat huntin' ole hyahs warn' no business for chillern!"

We knew that we had to "face the condign." There was no maudlin sentiment in that region. Solomon was truly believed to have been the wisest of men, and at least one of his decrees was still acted on in that pious community.

The black boys were shipped off to their mam-mies and I fear received their full share of "the condign."

BRED IN THE BONE

We were ushered solemnly into the house and were marched upstairs to meditate on our enormities.

We could hear the debate going on below, and now and then a gentle voice took up the cause. Presently a slow step mounted the stair and the door opened. It was a grave senior—owner of Don. We knew that we were gone.

“Boys, did n’t you know better than that?”

Three culprits looked at each other sideways and remained speechless. We were trying to figure out which was the more politic answer.

“Now, this is Christmas——”

“A time of peace and good-will,” said Met under his breath, but loud enough to be heard.

“Yes—and that ’s the reason I am going to appeal to you as to what should be done to you. Suppose you were in my place and I in yours, and you had told me never—*never* to take the pointers out to run hares, and I knew I was disobeying you, and yet I had done it deliberately—*deliberately* disobeyed you—what would you do?”

I confess that the case seemed hopeless. But Met saved the day.

“I ’ll tell you what I ’d do, sir.”

“What?”

THE LONG HILLSIDE

“I ’d give you another chance.”

“Hm—m—ah—ur——”

It was, however, too much for him, and he first began to smile and then to laugh. Met also broke out into a laugh, knowing that he had caught him.

So peace and good-will were restored and Christmas really began.

OLD JABE'S MARITAL
EXPERIMENTS

OLD JABE'S MARITAL EXPERIMENTS

OLD Jabe belonged to the Meriwethers, a fact which he never forgot or allowed anyone else to forget; and on this he traded as a capital, which paid him many dividends of one kind or another, among them being a dividend in wives. How many wives he had had no one knew; and Jabe's own account was incredible. It would have eclipsed Henry VIII and Bluebeard. But making all due allowance for his arithmetic, he must have run these worthies a close second. He had not been a specially good "hand" before the war, and was generally on unfriendly terms with the overseers. They used to say that he was a "slick-tongued loafer," and "the laziest nigger on the place." But Jabe declared, in defiance, that he had been on the plantation before any overseer ever put his foot there, and he would outstay the last one of them all, which, indeed, proved to be true. The overseers disappeared with the end

BRED IN THE BONE

of Slavery, but Jabe remained "slick-tongued," oily, and humorous, as before.

When, at the close of the war, the other negroes moved away, Jabez, after a brief outing, "took up" a few acres on the far edge of the plantation, several miles from the house, and settled down to spend the rest of his days, on what he called his "place," in such ease as constant application to his old mistress for aid and a frequently renewed supply of wives could give.

Jabe's idea of emancipation was somewhat one-sided. He had all the privileges of a freedman, but lost none of a slave. He was free, but his master's condition remained unchanged: he still had to support him, when Jabez chose to call on him, and Jabez chose to call often.

"Ef I don' come to you, who is I got to go to?" he demanded.

This was admitted to be a valid argument, and Jabez lived, if not on the fat of the land, at least on the fat of his former mistress's kitchen, with such aid as his current wife could furnish.

He had had several wives before the war, and was reputed to be none too good to them, a fact

OLD JABE'S MARITAL EXPERIMENTS

which was known at home only on hearsay; for he always took his wives from plantations at a distance from his home.

The overseers said that he did this so that he could get off to go to his "wife's house," and thus shirk work; the other servants said it was because the women did not know him so well as those at home, and he could leave them when he chose.

Jabez assigned a different reason:

"It don' do to have your wife live too nigh to you; she 'll want t' know too much about you, an' you can't never git away from her"—a bit of philosophy the soundness of which must be left to married men.

However it was, his reputation did not interfere with his ability to procure a new wife as often as occasion arose. With Jabez the supply was ever equal to the demand.

Mrs. Meriwether, his old mistress, was just telling me of him one day in reply to a question of mine as to what had become of him; for I had known him before the war.

"Oh! he is living still, and he bids fair to outlast the whole colored female sex. He is a perfect Bluebeard. He has had I do not know how many wives and I heard that his last wife

BRED IN THE BONE

was sick. They sent for my son, Douglas, the doctor, not long ago to see her. However, I hope she is better as he has not been sent for again."

At this moment, by a coincidence, the name of Jabez was brought in by a maid.

"Unc' Jabez, m'm."

That was all; but the tone and the manner of the maid told that Jabez was a person of note with the messenger; every movement and glance were self-conscious.

"That old—! He is a nuisance! What does he want now? Is his wife worse, or is he after a new one?"

"I d' n' kn', m'm," said the maid, sheepishly, twisting her body and looking away, to appear unconcerned. "Would n' tell me. He ain' after *me!*"

"Well, tell him to go to the kitchen till I send for him. Or—wait: if his wife 's gone, he 'll be courting the cook if I send him to the kitchen. And I don't want to lose her just now. Tell him to come to the door."

"Yes, 'm." The maid gave a half-suppressed giggle, which almost became an explosion as she said something to herself and closed the door. It sounded like, "Dressed up

OLD JABE'S MARITAL EXPERIMENTS

might'ly—settin' up to de cook now, I b'lieve."

There was a slow, heavy step without, and a knock at the back door; and on a call from his mistress, Jabez entered, bowing low, very pompous and serious. He was a curious mixture of assurance and conciliation, as he stood there, hat in hand. He was tall and black and bald, with white side-whiskers cut very short, and a rim of white wool around his head. He was dressed in an old black coat, and held in his hand an ancient beaver hat around which was a piece of rusty crape.

"Well, Jabez?" said his mistress, after the salutations were over. "How are you getting along?"

"Well, mist'is, not very well, not at all well, ma'am. Had mighty bad luck. 'Bout my wife," he added, explanatorily. He pulled down his lips, and looked the picture of solemnity.

I saw from Mrs. Meriwether's mystified look that she did not know what he considered "bad luck." She could not tell from his reference whether his wife was better or worse.

"Is she—ah? What—oh—how is Amanda?" she demanded finally, to solve the mystery.

"Mandy! Lord! 'm, 'Mandy was two back.

BRED IN THE BONE

She 's de one runned away wid Tom Halleck, an' lef' me. I don't know how *she* is. I never went ahter her. I wuz re-ally glad to git shet o' her. She was too expansive. Dat ooman want two frocks a year. When dese women begin to dress up so much, a man got to look out. Dee ain't always dressin' fer *you!*"

"Indeed!" But Mrs. Meriwether's irony was lost on Jabez.

"Yes, 'm; dat she did! Dis one 's name was Sairey." He folded his hands and waited, the picture of repose and contentment.

"Oh, yes. So; true. I 'd forgotten that 'Mandy left you. But I thought the new one was named Susan?" observed Mrs. Meriwether.

"No, 'm; not de *newes'* one. Susan—I had her las' Christmas; but she would n' stay wid me. She was al'ays runnin' off to town; an' you know a man don' want a ooman on wheels. Ef de Lawd had intended a ooman to have wheels, he 'd 'a' gi'n 'em to her, would n' he?"

"Well, I suppose he would," assented Mrs. Meriwether. "And this one is Sarah? Well, how is——?"

"Yes, 'm; dis one was Sairey." We just caught the past tense.

OLD JABE'S MARITAL EXPERIMENTS

"You get them so quickly, you see, you can't expect one to remember them," said Mrs. Meriwether, frigidly. She meant to impress Jabez; but Jabez remained serene.

"Yes, 'm; dat 's so," said he, cheerfully. "I kin hardly remember 'em myself."

"No, I suppose not." His mistress grew severe. "Well, how 's Sarah?"

"Well, m'm, I could n' exactly say—Sairey she 's done lef' me—yes, 'm." He looked so cheerful that his mistress said with asperity:

"Left you! She has run off, too! You must have treated her badly?"

"No, 'm. I did n'. I never had a wife I treated better. I let her had all she could eat; an' when she was sick——"

"I heard she was sick. I heard you sent for the doctor."

"Yes, 'm; dat I did—dat 's what I was gwine to tell you. I had a doctor to see her *twice*. I had two separate and *indifferent* physicians: fust Dr. Overall, an' den Marse Douglas. I could n' do no mo' 'n dat, now, could I?"

"Well, I don't know," observed Mrs. Meriwether. "My son told me a week ago that she was sick. Did she get well?"

The old man shook his head solemnly.

BRED IN THE BONE

“No, ’m; but she went mighty easy. Marse Douglas he eased her off. He is the bes’ doctor I ever see to let ’em die easy.”

Mingled with her horror at his cold-blooded recital, a smile flickered about Mrs. Meriwether’s mouth at this shot at her son, the doctor; but the old man looked absolutely innocent.

“Why did n’t you send for the doctor again?” she demanded.

“Well, m’m, I gin her two chances. I think dat was ’nough. I wuz right fond o’ Sairey; but I declar’ I ’d ruther lost Sairey than to *broke*.”

“You would!” Mrs. Meriwether sat up and began to bristle. “Well, at least, you have the expense of her funeral; and I ’m glad of it,” she asserted with severity.

“Dat ’s what I come over t’ see you ’bout. I ’m gwine to give Sairey a fine fun’ral. I want you to let yo’ cook cook me a cake an’—one or two more little things.”

“Very well,” said Mrs. Meriwether, relenting somewhat; “I will tell her to do so. I will tell her to make you a good cake. When do you want it?”

Old Jabez bowed very low.



"I don' keer nothin' 'bout de temper."

OLD JABE'S MARITAL EXPERIMENTS

"Thank you m'm. Yes, m'm; ef you 'll gi' me a right *good*-sized cake—an'—a loaf or two of flour-bread—an'—a ham, I 'll be very much obleeged to you. I heah she 's a mighty good cook?"

"She is," said Mrs. Meriwether; "the best I 've had in a long time." She had not caught the tone of interrogation in his voice, nor seen the shrewd look in his face, as I had done. Jabez appeared well satisfied.

"I 'm mighty glad to heah you give her sech a good char-àcter; I heahed you 'd do it. I don' know her very well."

Mrs. Meriwether looked up quickly enough to catch his glance this time.

"Jabez—I know nothing about her character," she began coldly. "I know she has a vile temper; but she is an excellent cook, and so long as she is not impudent to me, that is all I want to know."

Jabez bowed approvingly.

"Yes, 'm; dat 's right. Dat 's all I want t' know. I don' keer nothin' 'bout de temper; atter I git 'em, I kin manage 'em. I jist want t' know 'bout de char-àcter, dat 's all. I did n' know her so well, an' I thought I 'd ax you. I

BRED IN THE BONE

tolt her ef you 'd give her a good char-àcter, she might suit me; but I 'd wait fer de cake—*an'* de ham."

His mistress rose to her feet.

"Jabez, do you mean that you have spoken to that woman already?"

"Well, yes, 'm; but not to say *speak* to her. I jes kind o' mentioned it to her as I 'd inquire as to her char-àcter."

"And your wife has been gone—how long? Two days?"

"Well, mist'is, she 's gone fer good, ain't she?" demanded Jabez. "She can't be no mo' gone?"

"You are a wicked, hardened old sinner!" declared the old lady, vehemently.

"Nor, I ain't, mist'is; I clar' I ain't," protested Jabez, with unruffled front.

"You treat your wives dreadfully."

"Nor, I don't, mist'is. You ax 'em ef I does. Ef I did, dee would n' be so many of 'em anxious t' git me. Now, would dee? I can start in an' beat *a'* one o' dese young bloods aroun' heah, now." He spoke with pride.

"I believe that is so, and I cannot understand it. And before one of them is in her grave you are courting another. It is horrid—an old—

OLD JABE'S MARITAL EXPERIMENTS

Methuselah like you." She paused to take breath, and Jabez availed himself of the pause.

"Dat 's de reason I got t' do things in a kind o' hurry—I ain' no Methuselum. I got no time t' wait."

"Jabez," said Mrs. Meriwether, seriously, "tell me how you manage to fool all these women."

The old man pondered for a moment.

"Well, I declar, ' mist'is, I hardly knows how. Dee wants to be fooled. I think it is becuz dee wants t' see what de urrs marry me fer, an' what dee done lef' me. Woman is mighty curious folk."

I have often wondered since if this was really the reason.

THE CHRISTMAS PEACE

THE CHRISTMAS PEACE

I

THEY had lived within a mile of each other for fifty-odd years, old Judge Hampden and old Colonel Drayton; that is, all their lives, for they had been born on adjoining plantations within a month of each other. But though they had thus lived and were accounted generally good men and good neighbors, to each other they had never been neighbors any more than the Levite was neighbor to him who went down to Jericho.

Kindly to everyone else and ready to do their part by all other men, the Draytons and the Hampdens, whenever they met each other, always passed by on the other side.

It was an old story—the feud between the families—and, perhaps, no one now knew just how the trouble started. They had certainly been on opposite sides ever since they established themselves in early Colonial days on

BRED IN THE BONE

opposite hills in the old county from which the two mansions looked at each other across the stream like hostile forts. The earliest records of the county were those of a dispute between one Colonel Drayton and one Captain Hampden, growing out of some claim to land; but in which the chief bitterness appeared to have been injected by Captain Hampden's having claimed precedence over Colonel Drayton on the ground that his title of "Captain" was superior to Colonel Drayton's title, because he had held a real commission and had fought for it, whereas the Colonel's title was simply honorary and "Ye sayd Collonel had never smelled enough powder to kill a tom-cat."

However this might be and there was nothing in the records to show how this contention was adjudicated—in the time of Major Wilmer Drayton and Judge Oliver Hampden, the breach between the two families had been transmitted from father to son for several generations and showed no signs of abatement. Other neighborhood families intermarried, but not the Drayton-Hall and the Hampden-Hill families, and in time it came to be an accepted tradition that a Drayton and a Hampden would not mingle any more than would fire and water.

THE CHRISTMAS PEACE

The Hampdens were dark and stout, hot-blooded, fierce, and impetuous. They were apparently vigorous; but many of them died young. The Draytons, on the other hand, were slender and fair, and usually lived to a round old age; a fact of which they were wont to boast in contrast with the briefer span of the Hampdens.

“Their tempers burn them out,” the Major used to say of the Hampdens.

Moreover, the Draytons were generally cool-headed, deliberate, and self-contained. Thus, the Draytons had mainly prospered throughout the years.

Even the winding creek which ran down through the strip of meadow was a fruitful cause of dissension and litigation between the families. “It is as ungovernable as a Hampden’s temper, sir,” once said Major Drayton. On the mere pretext of a thunder-storm, it would burst forth from its banks, tear the fences to pieces and even change its course, cutting a new channel, now to one side and now to the other through the soft and loamy soil. A lawsuit arose over the matter, in which the costs alone amounted to far more than the value of the whole land involved; but no one doubted

BRED IN THE BONE

that old Major Drayton spoke the truth when he declared that his father would rather have lost his entire estate with all its rolling hills and extensive forests than the acre or two which was finally awarded to Judge Hampden.

As neither owner would join the other even in keeping up a partition fence, there were two fences run within three feet of each other along the entire boundary line between the two places. With these double fences, there could hardly be peace between the two families; for neither owner ever saw the two lines running side by side without at once being reminded of his neighbor's obstinacy and—of his own.

Thus, in my time the quarrel between the Drayton-Hall people and the Hampden-Hill folks was a factor in every neighborhood problem or proposition from a "church dressing" or a "sewing society meeting" to a political campaign. It had to be considered in every invitation and in every discussion.

It is not meant that there was no intercourse between the two families. Major Drayton and Judge Hampden regularly paid each other a visit every year—and oftener when there was serious illness in one house or the other—but even on such occasions their differences were

THE CHRISTMAS PEACE

liable to crop out. One of them held an opinion that when one gentleman was spending the night in another gentleman's house, it was the part of the host to indicate when bedtime had arrived; whilst the other maintained with equal firmness the doctrine that no gentleman could inform his guest that he was fatigued: that this duty devolved upon the guest himself. This difference of opinion worked comfortably enough on both sides until an occasion when Judge Hampden, who held the former view, was spending the night at Colonel Drayton's. When bedtime arrived, the rest of the household retired quietly, leaving the two gentlemen conversing, and when the servants appeared in the morning to open the blinds and light the fires, the two gentlemen were still found seated opposite each other conversing together quite as if it were the ordinary thing to sit up and talk all night long.

On another occasion, it is said that Major Drayton, hearing of his neighbor's serious illness, rode over to make inquiry about him, and owing to a slip of the tongue, asked in a voice of deepest sympathy, "Any hopes of the old gentleman dying?"

BRED IN THE BONE

II

YET, they had once been friends.

Before Wilmer Drayton and Oliver Hampden were old enough to understand that by all the laws of heredity and custom they should be enemies, they had learned to like each other. When they were only a few years old, the little creek winding between the two plantations afforded in its strip of meadow a delightful neutral territory where the two boys could enjoy themselves together, safe from the interference of their grave seniors; wading, sailing mimic fleets upon its uncertain currents, fishing together, or bathing in the deepest pools it offered in its winding course.

It looked, indeed, for a time as if in the fellowship of these two lads the long-standing feud of the Hampdens and Draytons might be ended, at last. They went to school together at the academy, where their only contests were a generous rivalry. At college they were known as Damon and Pythias, and though a natural rivalry, which might in any event have existed between them, developed over the highest prize of the institution—the debater's medal—the generosity of youth saved them. It was even said that young

THE CHRISTMAS PEACE

Drayton, who for some time had apparently been certain of winning, had generously retired in order to defeat a third candidate and throw the prize to Oliver Hampden.

They came home and both went to the Bar, but with different results. Young Drayton was learned and unpractical. Oliver Hampden was clever, able, and successful, and soon had a thriving practice; while his neighbor's learning was hardly known outside the circle of the Bar.

Disappointed in his ambition, Drayton shortly retired from the Bar and lived the life of a country gentleman, while his former friend rapidly rose to be the head of the Bar.

The old friendship might have disappeared in any event, but a new cause arose which was certain to end it.

Lucy Fielding was, perhaps, the prettiest girl in all that region. Oliver Hampden had always been in love with her. However, Fortune, ever capricious, favored Wilmer Drayton, who entered the lists when it looked as if Miss Lucy were almost certain to marry her old lover. It appeared that Mr. Drayton's indifference had counted for more than the other's devotion. He carried off the prize with a dash.

If Oliver Hampden, however, was severely

BRED IN THE BONE

stricken by his disappointment, he masked it well; for he married not long afterward, and though some said it was from pique, there was no more happily married pair in all the county.

A year later a new Oliver came to keep up the name and tenets of the Hampdens. Oliver Hampden, now the head of the Bar, would not have envied any man on earth had not his wife died a few years later and left him alone with his boy in his big house.

Lucy Drayton was born two years after young Oliver Hampden.

The mammies of the two children, as the mammies of their parents had done before them, used to talk them over on the edge of the shaded meadow which divided the places, and thus young Oliver Hampden, a lusty boy of five, came to know little Lucy Drayton fully three years before his father ever laid eyes on her.

Mr. Hampden was riding around his fences one summer afternoon, and was making his way along the double division line with a cloud on his brow as the double rows recalled the wide breach with his neighbor and former friend, and many memories came trooping at the recollection. Passing through a small grove which had

THE CHRISTMAS PEACE

been allowed to grow up to shut off a part of his view of the Drayton place, as he came out into the meadow his eye fell on a scene which made him forget the present with all its wrongs. On the green turf before him where butter-cups speckled the ground with golden blossoms, was a little group of four persons busily engaged and wholly oblivious of the differences which divided the masters of the two estates. The two mam-mies were seated side by side on a bank, sewing and talking busily—their large aprons and caps making a splotch of white against the green willows beyond—and in front of them at a little distance a brown-haired boy of five and a yellow-ringleted girl of three were at play on the turf, rolling over and over, shouting and laughing in their glee.

As the father rested his eyes on the group, the frown which had for a second lowered on his brow passed away and he pulled in his horse so as not to disturb them. He was about to turn back and leave them in their happiness when his black-eyed boy caught sight of him and ran toward him, shouting for a ride and calling over his shoulder for “Luthy” to “come on too.” As there was no escape, Mr. Hampden went for-

BRED IN THE BONE

ward and, ignoring the confusion of the mammies at being caught together, took the boy up before him and gave him a ride up and down the meadow. Then nothing else would do for Master Oliver but he "must take Luthy up, too."

"Perhaps 'Luthy' may be afraid of the horse?" suggested Mr. Hampden with a smile.

But far from it. Led by the little boy who had run to fetch her, she came to Mr. Hampden as readily as his own son had done, and, though she gave him one of those quick searching glances with which childhood reads character, having made sure that he was friendly, she was no more afraid of his horse than the boy was.

Oliver tried to lift her, and as he tugged at her, the father sat and watched with a smile, then leant down and picked her up while the two mammies gasped with mingled astonishment and fear.

"I tell you, she's pretty heavy," said the little boy.

"Indeed, she is," said the father, gaily.

Mr. Hampden would have taken his son home with him, but the latter declined the invitation. He wished to "stay with Luthy." So, Mr. Hampden, having first set the nurses' minds at ease by complimenting the little girl in warm

THE CHRISTMAS PEACE

terms to her mammy, rode home alone with his face set in deep reflection.

The breach between the Hampdens and the Draytons was nearer being closed that evening than it had been in three generations, for as Oliver Hampden rode up the bridle path across his fields, he heard behind him the merry laughter of the two children in the quiet meadow below, and old memories of his childhood and college life softened his heart. He forgot the double-line fences and determined to go on the morrow to Drayton Hall and make up the quarrel. He would offer the first overture and a full declaration of regret, and this, he was quite sure, would make it up. Once he actually turned his horse around to go straight across the fields as he used to do in his boyhood, but there below him were the double-line fences stretching brown and clear. No horse could get over them, and around the road it was a good five miles, so he turned back again and rode home and the chance was lost.

On his arrival he found a summons in a suit which had been instituted that day by Wilmer Drayton for damages to his land by reason of his turning the water of the creek upon him.

Mr. Hampden did not forbid old Lydia to take

BRED IN THE BONE

his boy down there again, but he went to the meadow no more himself, and when he and Wilmer Drayton met next, which was not for some time, they barely spoke.

III

YOUNG Oliver Hampden grew up clear eyed, strong, and good to look at, and became shy where girls were concerned, and most of all appeared to be shy with Lucy Drayton. He went to college and as he got his broad shoulders and manly stride he got over his shyness with most girls, but not with Lucy Drayton. With her, he appeared to have become yet more reserved. She had inherited her mother's eyes and beauty, with the fairness of a lily; a slim, willowy figure; a straight back and a small head set on her shoulders in a way that showed both blood and pride. Moreover, she had character enough, as her friends knew: those gray eyes that smiled could grow haughty with disdain or flash with indignation, and she had taught many an uppish young man to feel her keen irony.

“She gets only her intellect from the Draytons; her beauty and her sweetness come from

THE CHRISTMAS PEACE

her mother," said a lady of the neighborhood to Judge Hampden, thinking to please him.

"She gets both her brains and beauty from her mother and only her name from her father," snapped the Judge, who had often seen her at church, and never without recalling Lucy Fielding as he knew her.

That she and young Oliver Hampden fought goes without saying. But no one knew why she was cruelly bitter to a young man who once spoke slightly of Oliver, or why Oliver, who rarely saw her except at church, took up a quarrel of hers so furiously.

THE outbreak of the war, or rather the conditions preceding that outbreak, finally fixed forever the gulf between the two families. Judge Hampden was an ardent follower of Calhoun and "stumped" the State in behalf of Secession, whereas Major Drayton, as the cloud that had been gathering so long rolled nearer, emerged from his seclusion and became one of the sternest opponents of a step which he declared was not merely revolution, but actual rebellion. So earnest was he, that believing that slavery was the ultimate bone of contention, he emancipated his slaves on a system which he thought would

BRED IN THE BONE

secure their welfare. Nothing could have more deeply stirred Judge Hampden's wrath. He declared that such a measure at such a crisis was a blow at every Southern man. He denounced Major Drayton as "worse than Garrison, Phillips, and Greeley all put together."

They at last met in debate at the Court House. Major Drayton exasperated the Judge by his coolness, until the latter lost his temper and the crowd laughed.

"I do not get as hot as you do," said the Major, blandly. He looked as cool as a cucumber, but his voice betrayed him.

"Oh, yes, you do," snorted the Judge. "A mule gets as hot as a horse, but he does not sweat."

• This saved him.

There came near being a duel. Everyone expected it. Only the interposition of friends prevented their meeting on the field. Only this and one other thing.

Though no one in the neighborhood knew it until long afterward—and then only in a conjectural way by piecing together fragments of rumors that floated about—young Oliver Hampden really prevented the duel. He told his father that he loved Lucy Drayton. There was a fierce outbreak on the Judge's part.

THE CHRISTMAS PEACE

“Marry that girl!—the daughter of Wilmer Drayton? I will disinherit you if you but so much as——”

“Stop!” The younger man faced him and held up his hand with an imperious gesture. “Stop! Do not say a word against her or I may never forget it.”

The father paused with his sentence unfinished, for his son stood before him suddenly revealed in a strength for which the Judge had never given him credit, and he recognized in his level eyes, tense features, and the sudden set of the square jaw, the Hampden firmness at its best or worst.

“I have nothing to say against her,” said the Judge, with a sudden rush of recollection of Lucy Fielding. “I have no doubt she is in one way all you think her; but she is Wilmer Drayton’s daughter. You will never win her.”

“I will win her,” said the young man.

That night Judge Hampden thought deeply over the matter, and before daylight he had despatched a note to Major Drayton making an apology for the words he had used.

BOTH Judge Hampden and his son went into the army immediately on the outbreak of hostilities.

Major Drayton, who to the last opposed Seces-

BRED IN THE BONE

sion bitterly, did not volunteer until after the State had seceded; but then he, also, went in, and later was desperately wounded.

A few nights before they went off to the war, Judge Hampden and his son rode over together to Major Drayton's to offer the olive-branch of peace in shape of young Oliver and all that he possessed.

Judge Hampden did not go all the way, for he had sworn never to put foot again in Major Drayton's house so long as he lived, and, moreover, he felt that his son would be the better ambassador alone. Accordingly, he waited in the darkness at the front gate while his son presented himself and laid at Lucy Drayton's feet what the Judge truly believed was more than had ever been offered to any other woman. He, however, sent the most conciliatory messages to Major Drayton.

"Tell him," he said, "that I will take down my fence and he shall run the line to suit himself." He could not have gone further.

The time that passed appeared unending to the Judge waiting in the darkness; but in truth it was not long, for the interview was brief. It was with Major Drayton and not with his daughter.

THE CHRISTMAS PEACE

Major Drayton declined, both on his daughter's part and on his own, the honor which had been proposed.

At this moment the door opened and Lucy herself appeared. She was a vision of loveliness. Her face was white, but her eyes were steady. If she knew what had occurred, she gave no sign of it in words. She walked straight to her father's side and took his hand.

"Lucy," he said, "Mr. Hampden has done us the honor to ask your hand and I have declined it."

"Yes, papa." Her eyelids fluttered and her bosom heaved, but she did not move, and Lucy was too much a Drayton to unsay what her father had said, or to undo what he had done.

Oliver Hampden's eyes did not leave her face. For him the Major had disappeared, and he saw only the girl who stood before him with a face as white as the dress she wore.

"Lucy, I love you. Will you ever care for me? I am going—going away to-morrow, and I shall not see you any more; but I would like to know if there is any hope." The young man's voice was strangely calm.

The girl held out her hand to him.

"I will never marry anyone else."

BRED IN THE BONE

"I will wait for you all my life," said the young man.

Bending low, he kissed her hand in the palm, and with a bow to her father, strode from the room.

The Judge, waiting at the gate in the darkness, heard the far-off, monotonous galloping of Oliver's horse on the hard plantation road. He rode forward to meet him.

"Well?"

It was only a word.

"They declined."

The father scarcely knew his son's voice, it was so wretched.

"What! Who declined? Did you see—"

"Both!"

Out in the darkness Judge Hampden broke forth into such a torrent of rage that his son was afraid for his life and had to devote all his attention to soothing him. He threatened to ride straight to Drayton's house and horsewhip him on the spot. This, however, the young man prevented, and the two rode home together in a silence which was unbroken until they had dismounted at their own gate and given their horses to the waiting servants. As they entered the house, Judge Hampden spoke.

"I hope you are satisfied," he said, sternly.

THE CHRISTMAS PEACE

"I make but one request of you—that from this time forth, you will never mention the name of Drayton to me again as long as you live."

"I suppose I should hate her," said the son, bitterly, "but I do not. I love her and I believe she cares for me."

His father turned in the door-way and faced him.

"Cares for you! Not so much as she cares for the smallest negro on that place. If you ever marry her, I will disinherit you."

"Disinherit me!" burst from the young man. "Do you think I care for this place? What has it ever brought to us but unhappiness? I have seen your life embittered by a feud with your nearest neighbor, and now it wrecks my happiness and robs me of what I would give all the rest of the world for."

Judge Hampden looked at him curiously. He started to say, "Before I would let her enter this house, I would burn it with my own hands"; but as he met his son's steadfast gaze there was that in it which made him pause. The Hampden look was in his eyes. The father knew that another word might sever them forever.

IF ever a man tried to court death, young Oliver Hampden did. But Death, that struck many a

BRED IN THE BONE

happier man, passed him by, and he secured instead only a reputation for reckless courage and was promoted on the field.

His father rose to the command of a brigade, and Oliver himself became a captain.

At last the bullet Oliver had sought found him; but it spared his life and only incapacitated him for service.

There were no trained nurses during the war, and Lucy Drayton, like so many girls, when the war grew fiercer, went into the hospitals, and by devotion supplied their place.

Believing that life was ended for her, she had devoted herself wholly to the cause, and self-repression had given to her face the gentleness and consecration of a nun.

It was said that once as she bent over a wounded common soldier, he returned to consciousness, and after gazing up at her a moment, asked vaguely, "Who are you, Miss?"

"I am one of the sisters whom our Father has sent to nurse you and help you to get well. But you must not talk."

The wounded man closed his eyes and then opened them with a faint smile.

"All right; just one word. Will you please ask your pa if I may be his son-in-law?"

THE CHRISTMAS PEACE

Into the hospital was brought one day a soldier so broken and bandaged that no one but Lucy Drayton might have recognized Oliver Hampden.

For a long time his life was despaired of; but he survived.

When consciousness returned to him, the first sound he heard was a voice which had often haunted him in his dreams, but which he had never expected to hear again.

“Who is that?” he asked, feebly.

“It is I, Oliver—it is Lucy.”

The wounded man moved slightly and the girl bending over him caught the words, whispered brokenly to himself:

“I am dreaming.”

But he was not dreaming.

Lucy Drayton’s devotion probably brought him back from death and saved his life.

In the hell of that hospital one man at least found the balm for his wounds. When he knew how broken he was he offered Lucy her release. Her reply was in the words of the English girl to the wounded Napier, “If there is enough of you left to hold your soul, I will marry you.”

As soon as he was sufficiently convalescent, they were married.

BRED IN THE BONE

Lucy insisted that General Hampden should be informed, but the young man knew his father's bitterness, and refused. He relied on securing his consent later, and Lucy, fearing for her patient's life, and having secured her own father's consent, yielded.

It was a mistake.

Oliver Hampden misjudged the depth of his father's feeling, and General Hampden was mortally offended by his having married without informing him.

Oliver adored his father and he sent him a present in token of his desire for forgiveness; but the General had been struck deeply. The present was returned. He wrote: "I want obedience; not sacrifice."

Confident of his wife's ability to overcome any obstacle, the young man bided his time. His wounds, however, and his breach with his father affected his health so much that he went with his wife to the far South, where Major Drayton, now a colonel, had a remnant of what had once been a fine property. Here, for a time, amid the live-oaks and magnolias he appeared to improve. But his father's obdurate refusal to forgive his disobedience preyed on his health, and just after the war closed, he died a few months before his son was born.

THE CHRISTMAS PEACE

In his last days he dwelt much on his father. He made excuses for him, over which his wife simply tightened her lips, while her gray eyes burned with deep resentment.

“He was brought up that way. He cannot help it. He never had anyone to gainsay him. Do not be hard on him. And if he ever sues for pardon, be merciful to him for my sake.”

His end came too suddenly for his wife to notify his father in advance, even if she would have done so; for he had been fading gradually and at the last the flame had flared up a little.

Lucy Hampden was too upright a woman not to do what she believed her duty, however contrary to her feelings it might be. So, although it was a bitter thing to her, she wrote to inform General Hampden of his son's death.

It happened by one of the malign chances of fortune that this letter never reached its destination, General Hampden did not learn of Oliver's death until some weeks later, when he heard of it by accident. It was a terrible blow to him, for time was softening the asperity of his temper, and he had just made up his mind to make friends with his son. He attributed the failure to inform him of Oliver's illness and death to the malignity of his wife.

Thus it happened that when her son was born,

BRED IN THE BONE

Lucy Hampden made no announcement of his birth to the General, and he remained in ignorance of it.

IV

THE war closed, and about the only thing that appeared to remain unchanged was the relation between General Hampden and Colonel Drayton. Everything else underwent a change, for war eats up a land.

General Hampden, soured and embittered by his domestic troubles, but stern in his resolve and vigorous in his intellect, was driven by his loneliness to adapt himself to the new conditions. He applied his unabated energies to building up a new fortune. His decision, his force, and his ability soon placed him at the head of one of the earliest new enterprises in the State—a broken-down railway—which he re-organized and brought to a full measure of success.

Colonel Drayton, on the other hand, broken in body and in fortunes, found it impossible to adapt himself to the new conditions. He possessed none of the practical qualities of General Hampden. With a mind richly stored with the

THE CHRISTMAS PEACE

wisdom of others, he had the temperament of a dreamer and poet and was unable to apply it to any practical end. As shy and reserved as his neighbor was bold and aggressive, he lived in his books and had never been what is known as a successful man. Even before the war he had not been able to hold his own. The exactions of hospitality and of what he deemed his obligations to others had consumed a considerable part of the handsome estate he had inherited, and his plantation was mortgaged. What had been thus begun, the war had completed.

When his plantation was sold, his old neighbor and enemy bought it, and the Colonel had the mortification of knowing that Drayton Hall was at last in the hands of a Hampden. What he did not know was that General Hampden, true to his vow, never put his foot on the plantation except to ride down the road and see that all his orders for its proper cultivation were carried out.

Colonel Drayton tried teaching school, but it appeared that everyone else was teaching at that time, and after attempting it for a year or two, he gave it up and confined himself to writing philosophical treatises for the press, which were as much out of date as the Latin and Greek names which he signed to them. As these con-

BRED IN THE BONE

tributions were usually returned, he finally devoted himself to writing agricultural essays for an agricultural paper, in which he met with more success than he had done when he was applying his principles himself.

“If farms were made of paper he ’d beat *Cinnatus*,” said the General.

Lucy Hampden, thrown on her own resources, in the town in the South in which her husband had died, had for some time been supporting herself and her child by teaching. She had long urged her father to come to them, but he had always declined, maintaining that a man was himself only in the country, and in town was merely a unit. When, however, the plantation was sold and his daughter wrote for him, he went to her, and the first time that the little boy was put in his arms, both he and she knew that he would never go away again. That evening as they sat together in the fading light on the veranda of the little house which Lucy had taken, amid the clambering roses and jasmine, the old fellow said, “I used to think that I ought to have been killed in battle at the head of my men when I was shot, but perhaps, I may have been saved to bring up this young man.”

His daughter’s smile, as she leant over and

THE CHRISTMAS PEACE

kissed him, showed very clearly what she thought of it, and before a week was out, the Colonel felt that he was not only still of use, but was, perhaps, the most necessary, and, with one exception, the most important member of the family.

Nevertheless, there were hard times before them. The Colonel was too old-fashioned; too slow for the new movement of life, and just enough behind the times to be always expecting to succeed and always failing.

But where the father failed the daughter succeeded. She soon came to be known as one of the efficient women of the community, as her father, who was now spoken of as "the old Colonel," came to be recognized as one of the picturesque figures of that period. He was always thought of in connection with the boy. The two were hardly ever apart, and they were soon known throughout the town—the tall, thin old gentleman who looked out on the world with his mild blue eyes and kindly face, and the chubby, red-cheeked, black-eyed boy, whose tongue was always prattling, and who looked out with his bright eyes on all the curious things which, common-place to the world, are so wonderful to a boy.

BRED IN THE BONE

The friendship between an old man and a little child is always touching; they grow nearer together day by day, and the old Colonel and little Oliver soon appeared to understand each other, and to be as dependent on each other as if they had both been of the same age. The child, somewhat reserved with others, was bold enough with his grandfather. They held long discussions together over things that interested the boy; went sight-seeing in company to where the water ran over an old mill-wheel, or where a hen and her chickens lived in a neighbor's yard, or a litter of puppies gamboled under an out-house, or a bird had her nest and little ones in a jasmine in an old garden, and Colonel Drayton told the boy wonderful stories of the world which was as unknown to him as the present world was to the Colonel.

So matters went, until the Christmas when the boy was seven years old.

V

MEANTIME, General Hampden was facing a new foe. His health had suddenly given way, and he was in danger of becoming blind. His doctor

THE CHRISTMAS PEACE

had given him his orders—orders which possibly he might not have taken had not the spectre of a lonely old man in total darkness begun to haunt him. He had been “working too hard,” the doctor told him.

“Working hard! Of course, I have been working hard!” snapped the General, fiercely, with his black eyes glowering. “What else have I to do but work? I shall always work hard.”

The doctor knew something of the General’s trouble. He had been a surgeon in the hospital where young Oliver Hampden had been when Lucy Drayton found him.

“You must stop,” he said, quietly. “You will not last long unless you do.”

“How long?” demanded the General, quite calmly.

“Oh! I cannot say that. Perhaps, a year—perhaps, less. You have burned your candle too fast.” He glanced at the other’s unmoved face. “You need change. You ought to go South this winter.”

“I should only change my skies and not my thoughts,” said the General, his memory swinging back to the past.

The doctor gazed at him curiously. “What is the use of putting out your eyes and working

BRED IN THE BONE

yourself to death when you have everything that money can give?"

"I have nothing! I work to forget that," snarled the General, fiercely.

The doctor remained silent.

The General thought over the doctor's advice and finally followed it, though not for the reason the physician supposed.

Something led him to select the place where his son had gone and where his body lay amid the magnolias. If he was going to die, he would carry out a plan which he had formed in the lonely hours when he lay awake between the strokes of the clock. He would go and see that his son's grave was cared for, and if he could, would bring him back home at last. Doubtless, "that woman's" consent could be bought. She had possibly married again. He hoped she had.

VI

CHRISTMAS is always the saddest of seasons to a lonely man, and General Hampden, when he landed in that old Southern town on the afternoon of Christmas Eve, would not have been lonelier in a desert. The signs of Christmas preparation and the sounds of Christmas cheer

THE CHRISTMAS PEACE

but made him lonelier. For years, flying from the Furies, he had immersed himself in work and so, in part, had forgotten his troubles; but the removal of this prop let him fall flat to the earth.

As soon as the old fellow had gotten settled in his room at the hotel he paid a visit to his son's grave, piloted to the cemetery by a friendly and garrulous old negro hackman, who talked much about Christmas and "the holidays."

"Yes, suh, dat he had known Cap'n Ham'n. He used to drive him out long as he could drive out. He had been at his funeral. He knew Mrs. Ham'n, too. She sutney is a fine lady," he wound up in sincere eulogy.

The General gave a grunt.

He was nearer to his son than he had ever been since the day he last saw him in all the pride and beauty of a gallant young soldier.

The grave, at least, was not neglected. It was marked by a modest cross, on which was the Hampden coat-of-arms and the motto, "*Loyal*," and it was banked in fresh evergreens, and some flowers had been placed on it only that afternoon. It set the General to thinking.

When he returned to his hotel, he found the

BRED IN THE BONE

loneliness unbearable. His visit to his son's grave had opened the old wound and awakened all his memories. He knew now that he had ruined his life. The sooner the doctor's forecast came true, the better. He had no care to live longer. He would return to work and die in harness.

He sent his servant to the office and arranged for his car to be put on the first train next morning.

Then, to escape from his thoughts, he strolled out in the street where the shopping crowds streamed along, old and young, poor and well-to-do, their arms full of bundles, their faces eager, and their eyes alight.

General Hampden seemed to himself to be walking among ghosts.

As he stalked on, bitter and lonely, he was suddenly run into by a very little boy, in whose small arms was so big a bundle that he could scarcely see over it. The shock of the collision knocked the little fellow down, sitting flat on the pavement, still clutching his bundle. But his face after the first shadow of surprise lit up again.

"I beg your pardon, sir—that was my fault," he said, with so quaint an imitation of an old

THE CHRISTMAS PEACE

person that the General could not help smiling. With a cheery laugh, he tried to rise to his feet, but the bundle was too heavy, and he would not let it go.

The General bent over him and, with an apology, set him on his feet.

"I beg *your* pardon, sir. That was *my* fault. That is a pretty big bundle you have."

"Yes, sir; and I tell you, it is pretty heavy, too," the manikin said, proudly. "It 's a Christmas gift." He started on, and the General turned with him.

"A Christmas gift! It must be a fine one. Who gave it to you?" demanded the General, with a smile at the little fellow's confidence.

"It *is* a fine one! Did n't anybody give it to me. We 're giving it to somebody."

"Oh! You are? To whom?"

"I 'll tell you; but you must promise not to tell."

"I promise I will not tell a soul. I cross my heart."

He made a sign as he remembered he used to do in his boyhood.

The boy looked up at him doubtfully with a shade of disapproval.

"My grandfather says that you must not

BRED IN THE BONE

cross your heart—'t a gentleman's word is enough," he said, quaintly.

"Oh, he does? Well, I give my word."

"Well—" He glanced around to see that no one was listening, and sidling a little nearer, lowered his voice: "It 's a great-coat for grandfather!"

"A great-coat! That 's famous!" exclaimed the General.

"Yes, is n't it? You see—he 's mighty old and he 's got a bad cough—he caught it in the army, and I have to take care of him. Don't you think that 's right?"

"Of course, I do," said the General, envying one grandfather.

"That 's what I tell him. So mamma and I have bought this for him."

"He must be a proud grandfather," said the General, with envy biting deeper at his heart.

"I have another grandfather; but I don't like *him*," continued the little fellow.

"I am sorry for that," said the General, sincerely. "Why is that?"

"He was mean to my father, and he is mean to my mother." His voice conveyed a sudden bitterness.

"Oh!"

THE CHRISTMAS PEACE

"Mamma says I must like him; but I do not. I just can't. You would not like a man who was mean to your mother, would you?"

"I would not," declared the General, truthfully.

"And I am not going to like him," asserted the boy, with firmness.

The General suddenly pitied one grandfather.

They had come to a well-lighted corner, and as the boy lifted his face, the light fell on it. Something about the bright, sturdy countenance with its frank, dark eyes and brown hair suddenly sent the General back thirty years to a strip of meadow on which two children were playing: one a dark-eyed boy as sturdy as this one. It was like an arrow in his heart. With a gasp he came back to the present. His thoughts pursued him even here.

"What is your name?" he asked as he was feeling in his pocket for a coin.

"Oliver Drayton Hampden, sir."

The words were perfectly clear.

The General's heart stopped beating and then gave a bound. The skies suddenly opened for him and then shut up again.

His exclamation brought the child to a stop and he glanced up at him in vague wonder. The

BRED IN THE BONE

General stooped and gazed at him searchingly, almost fiercely. The next second he had pounced upon him and lifted him in his arms while the bundle fell to the pavement.

“My boy! I am your grandfather,” he cried, kissing him violently. “I am your grandfather Hampden.”

The child was lost in amazement for a moment, and then, putting his hands against the General’s face, he pushed him slowly away.

“Put me down, please,” he said, with that gravity which in a child means so much.

General Hampden set him down on the pavement. The boy looked at him searchingly for a second, and then turned in silence and lifted his bundle. The General’s face wore a puzzled look—he had solved many problems, but he had never had one more difficult than this. His heart yearned toward the child, and he knew that on his own wisdom at that moment might depend his future happiness. On his next words might hang for him life or death. The expression on the boy’s face, and the very set of his little back as he sturdily tugged at his burden, recalled his father, and with it the General recognized the obstinacy which he knew lurked in the Hampden blood, which had once been his pride.

THE CHRISTMAS PEACE

"Oliver," he said, gravely, leaning down over the boy and putting his hand on him gently, "there has been a great mistake. I am going home with you to your mother and tell her so. I want to see her and your grandfather, and I think I can explain everything."

The child turned and gazed at him seriously, and then his face relaxed. He recognized his deep sincerity.

"All right." He turned and walked down the street, bending under his burden. The General offered to carry it for him, but he declined.

"I can carry it," was the only answer he made except once when, as the General rather insisted, he said firmly, "I want to carry it myself," and tottered on.

A silence fell on them for a moment. A young man passing them spoke to the child cheerily.

"Hullo, Oliver! A Christmas present?—That 's a great boy," he said, in sheer friendliness to the General, and passed on. The boy was evidently well known.

Oliver nodded; then feeling that some civility was due on his part to his companion, he said briefly, "That 's a friend of mine."

"Evidently."

The General, even in his perplexity, smiled

BRED IN THE BONE

at the quaint way the child imitated the manners of older men.

Just then they came to a little gate and the boy's manner changed.

"If you will wait, I will run around and put my bundle down. I am afraid my grandfather might see it." He lowered his voice for the first time since the General had introduced himself. Then he disappeared around the house.

Oliver, having slipped in at the back door and carefully reconnoitred the premises, tripped up stairs with his bundle to his mother's room. He was so excited over his present that he failed to observe her confusion at his sudden entrance, or her hasty hiding away of something on which she was working. Colonel Drayton was not the only member of that household that Christmas who was to receive a great-coat.

When Oliver had untied his bundle, nothing would serve but he must put on the coat to show his mother how his grandfather would look in it. As even with the sleeves rolled up and with his arms held out to keep it from falling off him, the tails dragged for some distance on the floor and only the top of his head was visible above the collar, the resemblance was possibly not wholly exact. But it appeared to satisfy

THE CHRISTMAS PEACE

the boy. He was showing how his grandfather walked, when he suddenly recalled his new acquaintance.

"I met my other grandfather, on the street, mamma, and he came home with me." He spoke quite naturally.

"Met your other grandfather!" Mrs. Hampden looked mystified.

"He says he is my grandfather, and he looks like papa. I reckon he 's my other grandfather. He ran against me in the street and knocked me down, and then came home with me."

"Came home with you!" repeated Mrs. Hampden, still in a maze, and with a vague trouble dawning in her face.

"Yes 'm."

Oliver went over the meeting again.

His mother's face meantime showed the tumult of emotion that was sweeping over her. Why had General Hampden come? What had he come for? To try and take her boy from her?

At the thought her face and form took on something of the lioness that guards her whelp. Then as the little boy repeated what his grandfather had said of his reason for coming home with him, her face softened again. She heard a voice saying, "If he ever sues for pardon, be

BRED IN THE BONE

merciful to him for my sake." She remembered what day it was: the Eve of the day of Peace and Good-will toward all men. He must have come for Peace, and Peace it should be. She would not bring up her boy under the shadow of that feud which had blighted both sides of his race so long.

"Oliver," she said, "you must go down and let him in. Say I will come down."

"I will not like him," said the child, his eyes on her face.

"Oh, yes, you must; he is your grandfather."

"You do not love him, and I will not." The sturdy little figure and the serious face with the chin already firm for such a child, the dark, grave eyes and the determined speech, were so like his father that the widow gave half a cry.

"You must, my son, and I will try. Your father would wish it."

The little boy pondered for a second.

"Very well, mamma; but he must be good to you."

As the little fellow left the room, the widow threw herself on her knees.

THE CHRISTMAS PEACE

VII

As General Hampden stood and waited in the dusk, he felt that his whole life and future depended on the issue of the next few moments. He determined to take matters in his own hand. Every moment might tell against him and might decide his fate. So, without waiting longer, he rang the bell. A minute later he heard steps within, and the door was opened by one who he knew must be Colonel Drayton, though had he met him elsewhere he should not have recognized the white hair and the thin, bent form as that of his old friend and enemy. Colonel Drayton had evidently not seen his grandson yet, for he spoke as to a stranger.

“Will you not walk in, sir!” he said cordially. “I was expecting my little grandson who went out a short while ago.” He peered up the street. “Did you wish to see my daughter? You will find us in a little confusion—Christmas time is always a busy season with us on account of our young man: my grandson.” He lingered with pride over the words.

The General stepped into the light.

“Wilmer Drayton! Don’t you know me? I

BRED IN THE BONE

am Oliver Hampden, and I have come to apologize to you for all I have done which has offended you, and to ask you to be friends with me." He held out his hand.

The old Colonel stepped back, and under the shock of surprise paused for a moment.

"Oliver Hampden!" The next moment he stepped forward and took his hand.

"Come in, Oliver," he said, gently, and putting his other arm around the General's shoulder, he handed him into the little cosey, fire-lighted room as though nothing had happened since he had done the same the last time fifty years before.

At this moment the door opened and the little boy entered with mingled mysteriousness and importance. Seeing the two gentlemen standing together, he paused with a mystified look in his wide-open eyes, trying to comprehend the situation.

"Oliver, come here," said the Colonel, quietly. "This is your other grandfather."

The boy came forward, and, wheeling, stood close beside the Colonel, facing General Hampden, like a soldier dressing by his file-closer.

"*You* are my grandfather," he said, glancing up at the Colonel.

THE CHRISTMAS PEACE

The Colonel's eyes glowed with a soft light.

"Yes, my boy; and so is he. We are friends again, and you must love him—just as you do me."

"I will not love him as much," was the sturdy answer.

It was the General who spoke next.

"That is right, my boy. All I ask is that you will love me some." He was pleading with this young commissioner.

"I will, if you are good to my mother." His eyes were fastened on him without a tremor, and the General's deep-set eyes began to glow with hope.

"That 's a bargain," he said holding out his hand. The boy took it gravely.

Just then the door opened and Lucy Hampden entered. Her face was calm and her form was straight. Her eyes, deep and burning, showed that she was prepared either for peace or war. It was well for the General that he had chosen peace. Better otherwise had he charged once more the deadliest battle line he had ever faced. For a moment the General saw only Lucy Fielding.

With a woman's instinct the young widow comprehended at the first glance what had taken

BRED IN THE BONE

place, and although her face was white, her eyes softened as she advanced. The General had turned and faced her. He could not utter a word, but the boy sprang towards her and, wheeling, stood by her side.

Taking his hand, she led him forward.

“Oliver,” she said, gently, “this is your father’s father.” Then to the General, in a dead silence—“Father, this is your son’s son.”

The General clasped them both in his arms.

“Forgive me. Forgive me. I have prayed for *his* forgiveness, for I can never forgive myself.”

“He forgave you,” said the widow, simply.

VIII

No young king was ever put to bed with more ceremony or more devotion than was that little boy that night. Two old gentlemen were his grooms of the bedchamber and saw him to bed together.

The talk was all of Christmas, and the General envied the ease with which the other grandfather carried on the conversation. But when the boy, having kissed his grandfather, said of his

THE CHRISTMAS PEACE

own accord, "Now, I must kiss my *other* grandfather," he envied no man on earth.

The next morning when Oliver Hampden, before the first peep of light, waked in his little bed, which stood at the foot of his grandfather's bed in the tiny room which they occupied together, and standing up, peeped over the footboard to catch his grandfather's "Christmas gift," he was surprised to find that the bed was empty and undisturbed. Then having tiptoed in and caught his mother, he stole down the stairs and softly opened the sitting-room door where he heard the murmur of voices. The fire was burning dim, and on either side sat the two old gentlemen in their easy chairs, talking amicably and earnestly as they had been talking when he kissed them "good-night." Neither one had made the suggestion that it was bedtime; but when at the first break of day the rosy boy in his night-clothes burst in upon them with his shout of "Christmas gift," and his ringing laughter, they both knew that the long feud was at last ended, and peace was established forever.

MAM' LYDDY'S RECOGNITION

MAM' LYDDY'S RECOGNITION

I

WHEN Cabell Graeme was courting pretty Betty French up at the Château place, though he had many rivals and not a few obstacles to overcome, he had the good fortune to secure one valuable ally, whose friendship stood him in good stead. She was of a rich chocolate tint, with good features, and long hair, possibly inherited from some Arab ancestor, bead-like black eyes, and a voice like a harp, but which on occasion could become a flame. Her figure was short and stocky; but more dignity was never compressed within the same number of cubic inches.

Mam' Lyddy had been in the French family all her life, as her mother and grandmother had been before her. She had rocked on her ample bosom the best part of three generations. And when Freedom came, however much she may

BRED IN THE BONE

have appreciated being free, she had much too high an estimate of the standing of the Frenches to descend to the level of the class she had always contemned as "free niggers." She was a deep-dyed aristocrat.

The Frenches were generally esteemed to be among the oldest and best families in the county, and the Château plantation, with its wide fields and fine old mansion, was commonly reckoned one of the finest in that section. But no such comparative statement would have satisfied Mam' Lyddy. She firmly believed that the Frenches were the greatest people in the world, and it would have added nothing to her dignity had they been princes, because it could have added nothing to it to be told that she was a member of a royal house. Part mentor, part dependent, part domestic, she knew her position, and within her province her place was as unquestioned as was that of her mistress, and her advice was as carefully considered.

Cæsar, her husband, a tall, ebony lath, with a bald head and meek eyes, had come out of another family and was treated with condescension. No one knew how often he was reminded of his lower estate; but it was often enough, for he was always in a somewhat humble and apologetic attitude.

MAM' LYDDY'S RECOGNITION

The Frenches were known as a "likely" family, but Betty, with her oval face, soft eyes, and skin like a magnolia flower, was so undeniably the beauty that she was called "Pretty Betty." She was equally undeniably the belle. And while the old woman, who idolized her, found far more pleasure than even her mother in her belleship, she was as watchful over her as Argus. Every young man of the many who haunted the old French mansion among its oaks and maples had to meet the scrutiny of those sharp, tack-like eyes. The least slip that one made was enough to prove his downfall. The old woman sifted them as surely as she sifted her meal, and branded them with an infallible instinct akin to that of a keen watchdog. Many a young man who passed that silent figure without a greeting, or spoke lightly of some one, unheeding her presence, wondered at his want of success and felt without knowing why that he was pulling against an unseen current.

"We must drop him—he ain't a gent'man," she said of one. Of another: "Oh! Oh! honey, he won't do. He ain't our kind." Or, "Betty, let him go, my Lamb. De Frenches don't pick up dat kine o' stick."

Happily for Cabell Graeme, he had the old woman's approval. In the first place, he was

BRED IN THE BONE

related to the Frenches, and this in her eyes was a patent of gentility. Then, he had always been kind to little Betty and particularly civil to herself. He not only never omitted to ask after her health, but also inquired as to her pet ailments of "misery in her foot" and "whirlin' in her head," with an interest which flattered her deeply. But it went further back than that. Once, when Betty was a little girl, Cabell, then a well-grown boy of twelve, had found her and her mammy on the wrong side of a muddy road, and wading through, he had carried Betty across, and then wading back, had offered to carry Mam' Lyddy over, too.

"Go way f'om heah, boy, you can't carry me."

"Yes, I can, Mam' Lyddy. You don't know how strong I am." He squared himself for the feat.

She laughed at him, and with a flash in his gray eyes he suddenly grabbed her.

"I 'll show you."

There was quite a scuffle. She was too heavy for him, but he won her friendship then and there, and as he grew up straight and sturdy, the friendship ripened. That he teased her and laughed at her did not in the least offend her. No one else could have taken such a liberty with

MAM' LYDDY'S RECOGNITION

her, but Cabell's references to old Cæsar's declining health, and his inuendoes whenever she was "fixed up" that she was "looking around" in advance only amused her. It made no difference to her that he was poor, while several others of Betty's beaux were rich. He was "a gent'man," and she was an aristocrat.

At times they had pitched battles, but each knew that the other was an ally.

Cabell won his final victory by an audacity which few would have dared venture on. Among his rivals was one Mr. Hereford, whom he particularly disliked, partly because he frequently "outsat" him, and partly because he thought Miss Betty favored his attentions too much, and whom Mammy Lyddy detested because he always ignored her. Cabell charged her with deserting his cause and going over to the side of Mr. Hereford, and threatened to carry off the prize in spite of her and her ally.

"You cyant cyah off nothin'," she said with a sniff of mock disdain. His eyes snapped. Without a word he seized her, and notwithstanding her resistance he lifted her, and flinging her over his shoulder, as if she had been a sack of corn, stalked up the steps and into the house, where he set her down abashed and van-

BRED IN THE BONE

quished before her astonished young mistress. The old woman pretended to be furious, but that day Cabell Graeme carried off more than Mam' Lyddy.

When Cabel and pretty Betty were married, Mam' Lyddy threw in her lot with "her lamb."

Through all the evil days of carpet-bag rule, no white, not even Cabell Graeme himself, who was a leader of the young men, had looked with more burning contempt on the new-comers, or shown a sterner front to the miscreants who despoiled the country. And when Negro rule was at its worst, Mam' Lyddy was its most bitter reviler. Cabell Graeme was a captain among the young men who finally put down the evil element that had been running its riotous course. And during the fierce fight that was waged, he was much away from home; but he knew that in Mam' Lyddy he had left as redoubtable a guardian of his wife and babies as ever kept watch on a picket line.

Among the most obnoxious of the colored leaders was one Amos Brown, a young negro with some education, who to the gift of fluency added enough shrewdness to become a leader. He was while in power one of the most dangerous men in the State, and so long as he had back-

MAM' LYDDY'S RECOGNITION

ing enough, he staggered at nothing to keep the negroes stirred up. One of his schemes was to get money from the negroes with which to pay, as he claimed, ten per cent. for the best plantations in the State, after which, according to his account, the Government was to give them the places. This scheme worked well enough till the day of reckoning came, but happily it came. Among those who were duped was old Cæsar, who, unknown to Mam' Lyddy, invested all his little savings in Amos Brown's homestead-plan and was robbed. Partly in terror of Mam' Lyddy and partly in hopes of saving his money, the old man made a full disclosure of the scheme, and with the proof he furnished, Cabell Graeme and others succeeded in sending the statesman to the penitentiary.

What Cæsar possibly had to endure from Mam' Lyddy, only those could imagine who knew her blistering tongue. From that time she took herself not only everything that she made, but every cent that old Cæsar made.

"You keep 'dis for me, Marse Cab. I 'm never goin' to trust dat Cæsar wid a cent long as I live. A nigger ain't got a bit o' sense about money."

But though Cæsar would gladly have paid all

BRED IN THE BONE

he made to purchase immunity from her revilings, it is probable that he heard of his error at least three times a day during the rest of his natural life.

II

As long as the old people lived, the French place was kept up; but the exactions of hereditary hospitality ate deeply into what the war had left, and after the death of old Colonel French and Mrs. French, and the division of the estate, there was little left but the land, and that was encumbered.

Happily, Cabell Graeme was sufficiently successful as a lawyer, not only to keep his little family in comfort, but to receive an offer of a connection in the North, which made it clearly to his interest to go there. One of the main obstacles in the way of the move was Mam' Lyddy. She would have gone with them, but for the combined influences of Old Cæsar and a henhouse full of hens that were sitting. The old man was in his last illness, and a slow

MAM' LYDDY'S RECOGNITION

decline, and the chickens would soon be hatched. Since, however, it was apparent that old Cæsar would soon be gone, as that the chickens would soon be hatched, Graeme having arranged for Cæsar's comfort, took his family with him when he moved.

He knew that the breaking-up would be a wrench; but it was worse than he had expected, for their roots were deep in the old soil. Old friends, when they said good-by, wrung his hand with the faces men wear when they take a last look at a friend's face. The parting with the mammy was especially bitter. It brought the break-up home as few things had done. And when Mr. and Mrs. Graeme reached their new home with its strange surroundings, her absence made it all the stranger.

The change in the servants marked the change in the life. The family found it hard to reconcile themselves to it. Mrs. Graeme had always been accustomed to the old servants, who were like members of the family, and to find her domestics regarding her as an enemy or as their prey disturbed and distressed her.

"You are going to try colored servants?" asked one of her new friends in some surprise.

"Oh, yes, I am quite used to them."

BRED IN THE BONE

“Well.—Perhaps—but I doubt if you are used to these.”

Mrs. Graeme soon discovered her mistake. One after another was tried and discarded. Those who knew nothing remained until they had learned enough to be useful and then departed, while those who knew a little thought they knew everything and brooked no direction. And all were insolent. With or without notice the dusky procession passed through the house, each out-goer taking with her some memento of her transient stay.

“I do not know what is the matter,” sighed Mrs. Graeme. “I always thought I could get along with colored people; but somehow these are different. Why is it, Cabell?”

“Spoiled,” said her husband, laconically. “The mistake was in the emancipation proclamation. *Domestic* servants ought to have been excepted.”

His humor, however, did not appeal to his wife. The case was too serious.

“The last one I had told me, that if I did not like what she called coffee—and which I really thought was tea—I ’d better cook for myself. And that other maid, after wearing one of my best dresses, walked off with a brand-new waist.

MAM' LYDDY'S RECOGNITION

I am only standing the present one till Mammy comes. She says she likes to be called 'Miss Johnson.' "

"I paid twenty dollars last week for the privilege of chucking a dusky gentleman down the steps; but I did not begrudge it," said her husband, cheerfully. "The justice who imposed the fine said to me afterward that the only mistake I had made was in not breaking his neck."

At last, old Cæsar was gathered to his dusky fathers, and the chickens having been mainly disposed of, Mr. Graeme went down and brought the old mammy on.

He had written the old woman to come by a certain train to Washington where he would meet her, and true to his appointment he met that train. But in the motley throng that filed through the gate was no Mam' Lyddy, and inquiring of the train men showed that no one answering to her description could have been on the train.

Just as Graeme was turning away to go to the telegraph desk, one of the gray-clad colored porters, a stout, middle-aged man with a pleasant voice, and the address of a gentleman, approached him.

BRED IN THE BONE

“Were you looking for some one, sir?”

“Yes, for an old colored woman, my wife’s old mammy.”

“Well, I think you may find her in the inner waiting-room. There is an old lady in there, who has been waiting there all day. She came in on the morning train, and said she was expecting you. If you will come with me, I will show you.”

“She ’s been there all day,” the porter said, with a laugh, as they walked along. “I asked who she was waiting for; but she wouldn’t tell me. She said it was none of my business.”

“I fancy that ’s she,” said Graeme.

“Yes, sir, that ’s she, sure.”

Graeme thanked him. With a chuckle he led the way to where ensconced in a corner, surrounded by bundles and baskets and clad in the deepest black, and with a flaming red bow at her throat, sat Mammy Lyddy.

“Here ’s the gentleman you were looking for,” said the porter kindly.

At sight of Graeme she rose so hastily that many of her bundles rolled on the floor.

“Why, Mammy! Why did n’t you come on the train I wrote you to come on?” enquired Graeme.

MAM' LYDDY'S RECOGNITION

“Well, you tole me to come to-day, and I thought I would like to be on time, so I came this morning.”

“Now, if you will let me have your tickets, I will attend to everything for you,” said the porter to Graeme.

The old woman gave him a swift glance, and then seeing Graeme hand him his ticket, she turned her back, and began to fish in some mysterious recess in her garments, and after a long exploration brought out a small bag containing her ticket.

“Is he one of your servants?” she asked Graeme in an undertone.

Graeme smiled. “Well, I think he is—he is everybody’s servant and friend.”

“I did n’t know. He comes roun’ inquirin’ ’bout my business so officious I thought sure he was one o’ dese Gov’ment folks, and I done had ’nough to do wid dat kind.”

“Like Amos Brown, Cæsar’s friend.”

It was a sore subject with the old woman.

“Well, I did n’t know—I thought he was one o’ dese perliss. So I sent him ’long ’bout he own business. But if you know him it ’s all right.”

The passengers who streamed through the

BRED IN THE BONE

great station the evening of her arrival, were surprised to see a pudgy old black woman escorted by a gentleman who, loaded down with her bundles and baskets, was guiding her through the throng as respectfully as if she had been the first lady in the land. At the gate a lady and several children were awaiting her, and at sight of her a cry of joy went up. Dropping her bundles, the old woman threw herself into the lady's arms and kissed her again and again, after which she received a multitude of kisses from the children.

"Well, I never saw anything like that," said a stranger to another.

"She is their mammy," said the other one simply, with a pleasant light in his eyes.

The old woman's presence seemed to transform the house. She was no sooner installed than she took possession. That very morning she established her position, after a sharp but decisive battle with the airy "colored lady," who for some days had been dawdling about the house. The mammy had gauged her as soon as her sharp eyes fell on her.

"What does yo' call yo'self?" she asked her.

"What is my name? I am called 'Miss Johnson—Miss Selina Johnson.' "

MAM' LYDDY'S RECOGNITION

The old woman gave a sniff.

"Yo' is? Well, what does yo' call you'self doin' heah?"

"You mean what is my employment? I am the help—*one* of the help."

"Yo' is!" Mam' Lyddy tightened her apron-strings about her stout waist. "Well, 'Miss Johnson,' you git holt of that mat-trass and help me meck up dis heah bed so it 'll be fit for you' mistis to sleep on it." With a jerk she turned up the mattress. The maid was so taken aback for a moment that she did not speak. Then she drew herself up.

"I know I ain' gwine to tetch it. I done made it up onct to-day. An' I ain't got no mistis."

The mammy turned on her.

"Umh'm! I thought so! I knows jest yo' kind. Well, de sooner you git out o' dis room de better for you. 'Cause if I lay my han' 'pon you I won't let you go till I'se done what yo' mammy ought to 'a' done to you ev'y day o' yo' life."

She moved toward her with so dangerous a gleam in her sharp little eyes that "Miss Johnson" deemed it safest to beat a hasty retreat, and before bedtime had disappeared from the premises entirely.

BRED IN THE BONE

In the kitchen the old woman had been equally strenuous. She had shown the cook in one evening that she knew more about cooking than that well-satisfied person had ever dreamed any one knew. She had taught the other maid that she knew by instinct every lurking place of dirt, however skilfully hidden, and, withal, she had inspired them both with so much dread of her two-edged tongue that they were doing their best to conciliate her by a zeal and civility they had never shown before.

For the first time the Graemes knew what comfort was in their new home.

“Well, this is something like home,” said Mrs. Graeme that evening as she sat by the lamp. “Why, I feel like little Ben. He said, to-night, ‘Mamma, Mammy brought old times with her.’ ”

“May she live forever!” said Graeme.

In time, however, Mrs. Graeme began to feel that the old woman was confining herself too closely to the house. She needed some recreation. She had not even been to church, and Mrs. Graeme knew that this was her chief delight.

Yes, she would like to go to church, she said, but she did not know “about dese fine chutches.” She did not like much to go on the

MAM' LYDDY'S RECOGNITION

streets. "Dere was too many strange folks around for her. Dey did n't keer nuthin' for her ner she for dem." And it was "de same way, she reckoned, with de chutches. Dey wuz new niggers, and she did n't had no use for dem, nor dey for her."

Mrs. Graeme, however, was insistent. Not far off, she had learned, was a colored church, "Mount Salem," over which the Reverend Amos Johnson presided with much show of broadcloth and silk hat. He had considerable reputation as a speaker, and from time to time appeared in the newspapers as a rather ranting writer on matters with a political coloring. Mrs. Graeme explained to the old woman that she need have no more to do with the people than she wished, and the following Sunday she went herself with her to the door of the church. Before leaving her she gave her a half-dollar to put in the plate, and asked a solemn-looking usher to show her a good seat.

When the old woman returned she was interested, but critical.

"I'se been used to chutch all my life," she declared, "but I never saw no fixin's like dat. Br'er George Wash'n'ton Thomas of Mount Zion was de fancies' one I ever seen; but he

BRED IN THE BONE

could n't tetch dat man. Why, dey outdoes white folks!"

"Were n't they nice to you?" asked her mistress.

"Nor 'm', none too nice. Dat one what you spoke to for me wuz gwine to give me a seat; but a uppish young yaller one stopped him an' made him teck me back and stick me in a corner behind a pillar. But he did n't stick me so fur back 't dey did n't fine me when dey tecked up de money. When I put in dat fif'-cent you gi' me, he jumped like a pin had stick him. I dropped 't in so 't would soun', I tell you!"

This gave Mrs. Graeme an idea, and she encouraged her to go again the following Sunday, and this time gave her a dollar to put in the plate.

"Be sure and drop it in so it will sound," she said to her.

"I 'm gwine to."

"Well, how did you come out to-day?" she asked her on her return.

"Right well. Dey did n't stick me quite so fur back, and when I drap de dollar in dey wuz several on 'em lookin', and when de chutch was over dey come runnin' arter me, an', tell me ef I come next time dey 'll have a good seat for

MAM' LYDDY'S RECOGNITION

me. I 'm gwine agin, but fust thing dey know I 'm gwine to fool 'em. I ain't gwine put a dollar in agin, I know."

Mrs. Graeme laughed. "Oh! you must pay for being in society. We all do."

"I know I ain't," declared the old woman, "and I don't reckon you gwine to gi' me a dollar ev'y Sunday."

"I certainly am not. I am only getting you launched."

The following week Mrs. Graeme said to her husband, "I think Mammy is launched. The preacher came to the front door to-day and asked to see Mrs. Quivers. At first I did not know whom he meant. Then he said it was "a colored lady." You never saw any one so gotten up—silk hat, kid gloves, and ebony cane. And Mammy was quite set up by it. She says the preacher is from home and knew Cæsar. She was really airy afterward."

Mr. Graeme uttered an objurgation. "You will ruin that old woman, and with her the best old negro that ever was."

"Oh, no," said Mrs. Graeme, "there is no danger of that. You could n't spoil her."

A few weeks later she said: "Yes, Mammy is launched. She told me to-day she wanted

BRED IN THE BONE

to join the club, and when I asked, what club, she said, 'the Colored Ladies Siciety Club.' "

"I should say she was launched," sniffed Mr. Graeme. "She told me she wanted her money to invest it herself. The old fool! They will rob her of it."

III

THE weeks that followed, and Mam' Lyddy's immersion in "Siciety" began apparently to justify Mr. Graeme's prophecy. A marked change had taken place in the old woman's dress, and no less a change had taken place in herself. She began to go out a good deal, and her manner was quite new. She was what a few weeks before she would have derided as "citified and airified." At length Mrs. Graeme could not conceal it from herself any longer.

One evening as her husband on his return from his office threw himself on his chair with the evening paper, she brought up the subject.

"Cabell, it is true; you have noticed the change?"

"What? I have no doubt I have." He glanced at his wife to see if she had on a new dress or

MAM' LYDDY'S RECOGNITION

had changed the mode of wearing her hair, then gazed about him rather uneasily to see if the furniture had been shifted about, or if the pictures had been changed; points on which his wife was inclined to be particular.

"The change in Mammy? Why, I should never know her for the same person."

"Of course, I have. I have noticed nothing else. Why, she is dressed as fine as a fiddle. She is 'taking notice.' She 'll be giving Old Cæsar a successor. Then what will you do? I thought that fat darky I have seen going in at the back gate with a silk hat and a long-tailed coat looked like a preacher. You 'd better look out for him. You know she was always stuck on preachers. He is a preacher, sure."

"He is," observed the small boy on the floor. "That 's the Reverend Mr. Johnson. And, oh! He certainly can blow beautiful smoke-rings. He can blow a whole dozen and make 'em go through each other. You just ought to see him, papa."

His father glanced casually at the cigar box on the table.

"I think I will some day," said he, half grimly.

"I never would know her for the same person.

BRED IN THE BONE

Why, she is so changed!" pursued Mrs. Graeme. "She goes out half the time, and this morning she was so cross! She says she is as good as I am if she is black. She is getting like these others up here."

Mr. Graeme flung down the paper he was reading.

"It is these Northern negroes who have upset her, and the fools like the editor of that paper who have upset them."

Mrs. Graeme looked reflective.

"That preacher has been coming here a good deal lately. I wonder if that could have anything to do with it?" she said, slowly.

Her husband sniffed.

"I will find out."

At that moment the door opened and in walked Mam' Lyddy and a small boy in all the glory of five years, and all the pride of his first pair of breeches. The old woman's face wore an expression of glumness wholly new to her, and Mr. Graeme's mouth tightened. His wife had only time to whisper: "Now, don't you say a word to her." But she was too late. Mam' Lyddy's expression drove him to disobedience. He gave her a keen glance, and then said, half jocularly: "Old woman, what is the matter with you lately?"

MAM' LYDDY'S RECOGNITION

Mam' Lyddy did not answer immediately. She looked away, then said: "Wid me? Ain't nuttin' de matter wid *me*."

"Oh, yes, there is. What is it? Do you want to go home?"

She appeared half startled for an instant, then answered more sharply: "Nor, I don't wan' go home. I ain' got no home to go to."

"Oh, yes, you have. Well, what is the matter? Out with it. Have you lost any money?"

"Nor, I ain' lost no money 's *I* knows on."

"Been playing lottery?"

"I don' know what dat is."

"You don't, ah! Well, you would if you had been in Wall Street lately. Well, what is the matter? You are going around here as glum as a meat-axe. Something 's up. What is it?"

"Ain' nothin' de matter wid *me*." She glanced away under her master's half amused, half disdainful glance, then added half surlily: "I wants *rec'nition*."

"Want recognition? What do you mean?"

"Dat 's what *we* wants," declared the old woman, acquiring courage.

Graeme laughed.

"What is recognition?"

"I don't know what 't is edzac'ly, but dat's

BRED IN THE BONE

what we *wants*. You all 's got it and you got to gi' it to *us*."

"You mean you want to sit at table with us?" exclaimed Mrs. Graeme.

Mammy Lyddy turned toward her. "You know I don't mean nuttin' like dat! I leetle more 'n smacked that yaller gal' what you call you' maid over 'bout talkin' dat way t' other day."

"Then what do you want?"

"I wants *rec'nition*—dat's all I wants."

"Who told you to say that?" asked Mr. Graeme.

"Who tol' me to say dat?" She was puzzled.

"Yes."

"Ain' nobody tol' me to say it."

"Yes, some one has. Who was it?—the Reverend Johnson? Did n't he tell you that?"

She hesitated; but Mr. Graeme's eye was searching.

"Well, he no mo' 'n others—no *much* mo'. Of co'se, he tol' me dat—he *preaches* 'bout it; but did n't nobody *have* to tell me—I knows 'bout it myself."

"Of course you did, and you must have it. So shall the Reverend Mr. Johnson," said Mr. Graeme. His tone expressed such sudden am-

MAM' LYDDY'S RECOGNITION

iability that the old woman glanced at him suspiciously, but he was smiling softly and thoughtfully to himself.

"What did you do with the four hundred and fifty-five dollars you drew out of bank last week? Did you invest it or lend it to Mr. Johnson?" It was a bow drawn at venture, but the arrow hit the mark, as Mr. Graeme saw.

"I 'vested it."

"You mean Mr. Johnson invested it for you? By the way, what is his first name?"

"Yes, sir. His name 's de Rev. Amos Johnson."

"By George! I thought so," said Graeme, half aloud. "I saw him at the races last week. I knew I had seen him before." His countenance grew suddenly cheerful.

"What did he give you to show for it?"

"He did n't gi' me nothin'. He 's gwine to draw the intrust for me."

"Oh! I thought so. Well, I want to see the Rev. Mr. Johnson when he comes next time. When do you expect him?"

"I ain't 'pectin' him 't all. He comes sometimes. He was a friend o' Cæsar's."

"Ah! he was? So I thought. Comes to smoke a cigar, I suppose?"

BRED IN THE BONE

She looked so uneasy that he went on casually: Well, it 's very well; always keep in with the cloth. He is a fine preacher, I hear? Keeps quite up with the times—interested in the races in more senses than one.”

“Yes, sir; he preaches very well.”

“That is all. Well, your friend must have ‘rec’nition.’ ”

The old woman withdrew.

The following day Graeme went down to a detective agency and left a memorandum. A few days later he received a message from the agency: “Yes, he is the same man. He frequents the pool-rooms a good deal. Came from Kentucky. He used to be known as ‘Amos Brown.’ ”

IV

FOR some days Mr. Graeme took to coming home earlier than usual, and one evening he was rewarded. Just after his arrival little Ben came in, and, climbing up to his cigar box, took out several cigars, and silently withdrew. As soon as he had disappeared his father stepped to the telephone, and, calling up the detective

MAM' LYDDY'S RECOGNITION

agency, asked that an officer be sent around to his house immediately. A few minutes later the officer arrived, and after a few words with him Mr. Graeme stationed him at the back gate and strolled back toward the kitchen. As he softly approached the door he heard voices within—one of them his little boy's voice, the other the deep, unctuous tones of a negro man. The child was begging the latter to blow smoke-wreaths, and the man was bartering with him.

“Well, you must get me *more* cigars; remember what I told you—six wreaths for one cigar.”

At this moment the mammy evidently came in, for Mr. Graeme heard the man caution the child, and heard her voice for the first time.

“What dat you telling dat chile?” she demanded, suspiciously.

“Nothing. I was just entertaining him by blowing a few of those artistic wreaths he admires so much. My good friends keep me in cigars. It is one of the few consolations in a hard-working pastor's life. Well, sister, I called around to tell you your investment promises to be even more remunerative than I expected—and to tell you if you have any more, or even can borrow any, to let me place it as

BRED IN THE BONE

you did the other. I can guarantee to double it for you in a short time.”

“I ain’ got any more—an’ I ain’ got nobody to lend me none.”

“Well, ah! Could n’t you get any from your employer?” He lowered his voice; but Graeme caught the words. “You could raise money on the silver—and they would never know it. Besides, they owe it to you for all the work you have done without payment. Think how many years you worked for them as a slave without pay.”

“Now, I ain’ gwine to do dat!” exclaimed the old woman.

At this moment Graeme softly opened the door. The mammy was standing with her back to him, and in one chair, tilted back with his feet in another chair, was a large and unctuous-looking negro of middle age, in all the glory of a black broadcloth coat and a white tie. He was engaged at the moment in blowing small wreaths, while little Ben stood by and gazed at him with open-eyed wonder and delight.

At sight of Mr. Graeme, the preacher with a gulp, which sadly disturbed his last effort, rose to his feet. An expression of fear flitted across his face, then gave way to a crafty, half-insolent look.

MAM' LYDDY'S RECOGNITION

"Good evening, sir," he began, with an insinuating smile, not wholly free from uneasiness.

"Good evening, Amos. Mammy, will you kindly go to your mistress. Take the boy with you. Run along, son."

The old woman with a half-scared air led the child out, and Mr. Graeme closed the door and turned back to the visitor, who looked much embarrassed.

"Take my cigars out of your pocket."

The preacher's hand went involuntarily to his breast-pocket, and then came down.

"What? Your cigars out of my pocket? I have no cigars of yours, sir." He spoke with slightly rising severity, as Mr. Graeme remained so calm.

"Oh, yes, you have. But no matter for the present. You had just as well leave them there for a moment. What are you doing, coming here all the time?"

"What am I doing?—Coming here? I am a minister of the Gawspel, sir, and I have a member of my congregation here, and I come to look after her welfare."

"And to see that she gets recognition?"

"Suh?"—with a wince.

"And incidentally to rob me of my cigars,

BRED IN THE BONE

and her of her small savings"—pursued Mr. Graeme, calmly.

"Suh? Nor, suh, I has not done dat. I will take my oath to it on the word of Almighty God."

The veneer of his fine speech had all been dropped, and the Rev. Johnson was talking naturally enough now.

"What did you do with that money you took from her?"

"What did I do wid—? What money?"

Mr. Graeme showed impatience for the first time.

"The four hundred and fifty-five dollars you got from her. Was there more than that?"

At this point Mam' Lyddy opened the door and came in. She looked somewhat mystified and rather disturbed, but she said nothing. She only took her stand, and with arms folded waited silent and observant.

The negro saw that Mr. Graeme knew of the fact and answered promptly.

"Oh! You are mistaken, sir. I have taken no money of her. You can ax her. She had a sum of money which I as a favor to her invested for her. You can ask the sister there. I suppose you refer to that?"

MAM' LYDDY'S RECOGNITION

"Invested! In what?"

"Ah—ur—in—ur—the Afro-American Sister's Loan and Trust Association. I have promised to invest it in that for her."

He stammered a good deal at the start, but was glib enough when he brought out the name.

"Didn't I, sister?"

"Yes, sir." The old woman was manifestly impressed. The preacher's cunning face brightened.

"You see what she says?"

"With its chief office at the Race-course out here," said Graeme, with a toss of his head.

"Look here, I want you to get that money."

The negro shot a glance at Mam' Lyddy and decided that she would stand by him. He suddenly stiffened up and resumed his affected manner.

"Well, sir, I do not know by what right you interfere with my affairs—or this lady's."

"You don't? Well, that's what I am going to show you now. My right is that she is a member of my family, whom I am going to protect from just such scoundrels and thieves as you, Amos Brown."

The preacher received the name like a blow.

At the words the old mammy jumped as if

BRED IN THE BONE

she were shot. She leaned forward, moving up slowly.

“What’s dat?—‘Amos *Brown*’? What’s dat you said, Marse Cabell? ‘Amos *Brown*’?”

Mr. Graeme nodded. “Yes. This is Amos Brown, ‘a friend of Cæsar’s.’”

“Indeed, I ain’t, suh. I ’m de Reverend Amos Johnson—” began the preacher, but his looks belied him. Mammy Lyddy took in the truth, and the next second the storm broke.

“‘Amos Brown’ you is? I might ’a’ knowd it! You thief! You a friend of Cæsar’s! Whar’s my money?—My money you stole from Cæsar? You come talkin’ to me ’bout rec’nition? I done rec’nize you, you black nigger. Let me get at him, Marse Cabell.”

The old woman swept toward him with so threatening an air that Graeme interposed, and the preacher retreated behind him for protection. Even that place of security did not, however, save him from her vitriolic tongue. She poured out on him the vials of her wrath till Graeme, fearing she might drop down in a faint, stopped her.

“Stop now. I will settle with him.”

His authoritative air quieted her, but she still stood glowering and muttering her wrath.

“You will have that money back here by to-

MAM' LYDDY'S RECOGNITION

morrow at this hour or I will put you in the penitentiary, where you have already been once and ought to be now. And now you will take my cigars out of your pocket, or I will hand you to that policeman out there at the door. Out with them."

"Boss, I ain't got no cigars o' yo's. I 'll swar to it on de wud o'——"

"Out with them—or—" Mr. Graeme turned to open the door. The negro, after a glance at Mam' Lyddy, slowly took several cigars from his pockets.

"Dese is all de cigars I has—and dey wuz given to me by a friend," he said, surlily.

"Yes, by my little boy. I know. Lay them there. I will keep them till to-morrow. And now go and get that money."

"What money?—I can't git dat money—dat money is invested."

"Then you bring the securities in which it is invested. I know where that money went. You go and rob some one else—but have that money at my office to-morrow before three o'clock or I 'll put you in jail to-morrow night. And if you ever put your foot on this place or speak to that old woman again, I 'll have you arrested. Do you understand?"

"Yes, sir."

BRED IN THE BONE

“Now go.” He opened the door.

“Officer, do you recognize this man?”

“Yes, sir, I know him.”

“Well, I am going to let him go for the present.”

The Rev. Amos was already slinking down the street. Mr. Graeme turned to the old woman.

“You want recognition?”

“Nor, suh, I don’t.” She gave a whimper.

“I wants my money. I wants to git hold of dat black nigger what ’s done rob me talkin’ ’bout bein’ sich a friend o’ Cæsar’s.”

“Do you want to go home?”

“Dis is my home.” She spoke humbly, but firmly.

Two days afterward Mrs. Graeme said:

“Cabell, Mammy is converted. It is like old times.”

“I think it will last,” said her husband. “She is out four hundred and fifty-five dollars, and the Mount Salem flock is temporarily without a shepherd. The Rev. Amos Johnson was gathered in this morning for fleecing one of his sheep and signing the wrong name to a check.”

ELSKET

ELSKET¹

“The knife hangs loose in the sheath.”

—*Old Norsk Proverb.*

I SPENT a month of the summer of 188— in Norway—“Old Norway”—and a friend of mine, Dr. John Robson, who is as great a fisherman as he is a physician, and knows that I love a stream where the trout and I can meet each other alone, and have it out face to face, uninterrupted by any interlopers, did me a favor to which I was indebted for the experience related below. He had been to Norway two years before, and he let me into the secret of an unexplored region between the Nord Fiord and the Romsdal. I cannot give the name of the place, because even now it has not been fully explored and he bound me by solemn promise that I would not divulge it to a single soul, actually going to the length of insisting on my adding a formal oath to my affirmation. This I consented to because I knew that my friend was a humorous man, and also because otherwise he positively refused to inform me where

¹ From “Elsket and other Stories.” Copyright, 1891, by Charles Scribner's Sons.

BRED IN THE BONE

the streams were about which he had been telling such fabulous fish stories. "No," he said, "some of those——cattle who think they own the earth and have a right to fool women at will and know how to fish, will be poking in there, worrying Olaf and Elsket, and ruining the fishing, and I 'll be——if I tell you unless you make oath." My friend is a swearing man, though he says he swears for emphasis, not blasphemy, and on this occasion he swore with extreme solemnity. I saw that he was in earnest, so made affidavit and was rewarded.

"Now," he said, after inquiring about my climbing capacity in a way which piqued me, and giving me the routes with a particularity which somewhat mystified me, "Now I will write a letter to Olaf of the Mountain and to Elsket. I once was enabled to do them a slight service, and they will receive you. It will take him two or three weeks to get it, so you may have to wait a little. You must wait at L——until Olaf comes down to take you over the mountain. You may be there when he gets the letter, or you may have to wait for a couple of weeks, as he does not come over the mountain often. However, you can amuse yourself around L——; only you must always be on hand every night in case Olaf comes."

ELSKET

Although this appeared natural enough to the doctor, it sounded rather curious to me, and it seemed yet more so when he added, "By the way, one piece of advice: don't talk about England to Elsket, and don't ask any questions."

"Who is Elsket?" I asked.

"A daughter of the Vikings, poor thing," he said.

My curiosity was aroused, but I could get nothing further out of him, and set it down to his unreasonable dislike of traveling Englishmen, against whom, for some reason, he had a violent antipathy, declaring that they did not know how to treat women nor how to fish. My friend has a custom of speaking very strongly, and I used to wonder at the violence of his language, which contrasted strangely with his character; for he was the kindest-hearted man I ever knew, being a true follower of his patron saint, old Isaac, giving his sympathy to all the unfortunate, and even handling his frogs as if he loved them.

Thus it was that on the afternoon of the seventh day of July, 188—, having, for purposes of identification, a letter in my pocket to "Olaf of the Mountain from his friend Dr. Robson," I stood, in the rain, in the so-called "street" of L—, on the — Fiord, looking over the

BRED IN THE BONE

bronzed faces of the stolid but kindly peasants who lounged silently around, trying to see if I could detect in one a resemblance to the picture I had formed in my mind of "Olaf of the Mountain," or could discern in any eye a gleam of special interest to show that its possessor was on the watch for an expected guest.

There was none in whom I could discover any indication that he was not a resident of the straggling little settlement. They all stood quietly about gazing at me and talking in low tones among themselves, chewing tobacco or smoking their pipes, as naturally as if they were in Virginia or Kentucky, only, if possible, in a somewhat more ruminant manner. It gave me the single bit of home feeling I could muster, for it was, I must confess, rather desolate standing alone in a strange land, under those beetling crags, with the clouds almost resting on our heads, and the rain coming down in a steady, wet, monotonous fashion. The half-dozen little dark log or frame-houses, with their double windows and turf roofs, standing about at all sorts of angles to the road, as if they had rolled down the mountain like the great boulders beyond them, looked dark and cheerless. I was weak enough to wish for a second that I

ELSKET

waist, held it out to me. I obeyed his silent gesture, and binding it around my body gave him the end. He wrapped it about him, and then taking me by the arm, as if I had been a child, he led me slowly along the narrow ledge around the face of the wall, step by step, telling me where to place my feet, and waiting till they were firmly planted. I began now to understand why no one ever went "over the mountain" in the day. We were on a ledge nearly three thousand feet high. If it had not been for the strong, firm hold on my arm, I could not have stood it. As it was I dared not think. Suddenly we turned a sharp angle and found ourselves in a curious semicircular place, almost level and fifty or sixty feet deep in the concave, as if a great piece had been gouged out of the mountain by the glacier which must once have been there.

"This is a curious place," I ventured to say.

"It is," said my guide. "It is the Devil's Seat. Men have died here."

His tone was almost fierce. I accepted his explanation silently. We passed the singular spot and once more were on the ledge, but except in one place it was not so narrow as it had been on the other side of the Devil's Seat, and

BRED IN THE BONE

No man can fill his pipe from another's bag and not wish him well.

"Does any of you know Olaf of the Mountain?" I asked. I saw at once that I had made an impression. The mention of that name was evidently a claim to consideration. There was a general murmur of surprise, and the group gathered around me. A half-dozen spoke at once.

"He was at L—— last week," they said, as if that fact was an item of extensive interest.

"I want to go there," I said, and then was, somehow immediately conscious that I had made a mistake. Looks were exchanged and some words were spoken among my friends, as if they were oblivious of my presence.

"You cannot go there. None goes there but at night," said one, suggestively.

"Who goes over the mountain comes no more," said another, as if he quoted a proverb, at which there was a faint intimation of laughter on the part of several.

My first adviser undertook a long explanation, but though he labored faithfully I could make out no more than that it was something about "Elsket" and "the Devil's Ledge," and men who had disappeared. This was a new

ELSKET

revelation. What object had my friend? He had never said a word of this. Indeed, he had, I now remembered, said very little at all about the people. He had exhausted his eloquence on the fish. I recalled his words when I asked him about Elsket: "She is a daughter of the Vikings, poor thing." That was all. Had he been up to a practical joke? If so, it seemed rather a sorry one to me just then. But anyhow I could not draw back now. I could never face him again if I did not go on, and what was more serious, I could never face myself. I was weak enough to have a thought that, after all, the mysterious Olaf might not come; but the recollection of the fish of which my friend had spoken as if they had been the golden fish of the "Arabian Nights," banished that. I asked about the streams around L——. "Yes, there was good fishing." But they were all too anxious to tell me about the danger of going over the mountain to give much thought to the fishing. "No one without Olaf's blood could cross the Devil's Ledge." "Two men had disappeared three years ago." "A man had disappeared there last year. He had gone, and had never been heard of afterward. The Devil's Ledge was a bad pass."

BRED IN THE BONE

"Why don't they look into the matter?" I asked.

The reply was as near a shrug of the shoulders as a Norseman can accomplish.

"It was not easy to get the proof; the mountain was very dangerous, the glacier very slippery; there were no witnesses," etc. "Olaf of the Mountain was not a man to trouble."

"He hates Englishmen," said one, significantly.

"I am not an Englishman, I am an American," I explained.

This had a sensible effect. Several began to talk at once. One had a brother in Idaho, another had cousins in Nebraska, and so on.

The group had by this time been augmented by the addition of almost the entire population of the settlement; one or two women, having babies in their arms, standing in the rain utterly regardless of the steady downpour.

It was a propitious time. "Can I get a place to stay here?" I inquired of the group generally.

"Yes,—oh, yes." There was a consultation in which the name of "Hendrik" was heard frequently, and then a man stepped forward and taking up my bag and rod-case, walked off, I following, escorted by a number of my new friends.

ELSKET

I had been installed in Hendrik's little house about an hour, and we had just finished supper, when there was a murmur outside, and then the door opened, and a young man stepping in, said something so rapidly that I understood only that it concerned Olaf of the Mountain, and in some way myself.

"Olaf of the Mountain is here and wants to speak to you," said my host. "Will you go?"

"Yes," I said. "Why does he not come in?"

"He will not come in," said my host; "he never does come in."

"He is at the church-yard," said the messenger; "he always stops there." They both spoke broken English.

I arose and went out, taking the direction indicated. A number of my friends stood in the road or street as I passed along, and touched their caps to me, looking very queer in the dim twilight. They gazed at me curiously as I walked by.

I turned the corner of a house which stood half in the road, and just in front of me, in its little yard, was the little white church with its square, heavy, short spire. At the gate stood a tall figure, perfectly motionless, leaning on a long staff. As I approached I saw that he was an elderly man. He wore a long beard, once

BRED IN THE BONE

yellow but now gray, and he looked very straight and large. There was something grand about him as he stood there in the dusk.

I came quite up to him. He did not move.

“Good-evening,” I said.

“Good-evening.”

“Are you Mr. Hovedsen?” I asked, drawing out my letter.

“I am Olaf of the Mountain,” he said slowly, as if his name embraced the whole title.

I handed him the letter.

“You are——?”

“I am——” taking my cue from his own manner.

“The friend of her friend?”

“His great friend.”

“Can you climb?”

“I can.”

“Are you steady?”

“Yes.”

“It is well; are you ready?”

I had not counted on this, and involuntarily I asked, in some surprise, “To-night?”

“To-night. You cannot go in the day.”

I thought of the speech I had heard: “No one goes over the mountain except at night,”

ELSKET

and the ominous conclusion, "Who goes over the mountain comes no more." My strange host, however, diverted my thoughts.

"A stranger cannot go except at night," he said, gravely; and then added, "I must get back to watch over Elsket."

"I shall be ready in a minute," I said, turning.

In ten minutes I had bade good-by to my simple hosts, and leaving them with a sufficient evidence of my consideration to secure their lasting good-will, I was on my way down the street again with my light luggage on my back. This time the entire population of the little village was in the road, and as I passed along I knew by their murmuring conversation that they regarded my action with profound mis-giving. I felt, as I returned their touch of the cap and bade them good-by, a little like the gladiators of old who, about to die, saluted Cæsar.

At the gate my strange guide, who had not moved from the spot where I first found him, insisted on taking my luggage, and buckling his straps around it and flinging it over his back, he handed me his stick, and without a word

BRED IN THE BONE

strode off straight toward the black mountain whose vast wall towered above us to the clouds.

I shall never forget that climb.

We were hardly out of the road before we began to ascend, and I had shortly to stop for breath. My guide, however, if silent was thoughtful, and he soon caught my gait and knew when to pause. Up through the dusk we went, he guiding me now by a word telling me how to step, or now turning to give me his hand to help me up a steep place, over a large rock, or around a bad angle. For a time we had heard the roar of the torrent as it boiled below us, but as we ascended it had gradually hushed, and we at length were in a region of profound silence. The night was cloudy, and as dark as it ever is in midsummer in that far northern latitude; but I knew that we were climbing along the edge of a precipice, on a narrow ledge of rock along the face of the cliff. The vast black wall above us rose sheer up, and I could feel rather than see that it went as sheer down, though my sight could not penetrate the darkness which filled the deep abyss below. We had been climbing about three hours when suddenly the ledge seemed to die out. My guide stopped, and unwinding his rope from his

ELSKET

waist, held it out to me. I obeyed his silent gesture, and binding it around my body gave him the end. He wrapped it about him, and then taking me by the arm, as if I had been a child, he led me slowly along the narrow ledge around the face of the wall, step by step, telling me where to place my feet, and waiting till they were firmly planted. I began now to understand why no one ever went "over the mountain" in the day. We were on a ledge nearly three thousand feet high. If it had not been for the strong, firm hold on my arm, I could not have stood it. As it was I dared not think. Suddenly we turned a sharp angle and found ourselves in a curious semicircular place, almost level and fifty or sixty feet deep in the concave, as if a great piece had been gouged out of the mountain by the glacier which must once have been there.

"This is a curious place," I ventured to say.

"It is," said my guide. "It is the Devil's Seat. Men have died here."

His tone was almost fierce. I accepted his explanation silently. We passed the singular spot and once more were on the ledge, but except in one place it was not so narrow as it had been on the other side of the Devil's Seat, and

BRED IN THE BONE

in fifteen minutes we had crossed the summit and the path widened a little and began to descend.

“You do well,” said my guide, briefly, “but not so well as Doctor John.” I was well content with being ranked a good second to the doctor just then.

The rain had ceased, the sky had partly cleared, and, as we began to descend, the early twilight of the northern dawn began to appear. First the sky became a clear steel-gray and the tops of the mountains became visible, the dark outlines beginning to be filled in, and taking on a soft color. This lightened rapidly, until on the side facing east they were bathed in an atmosphere so clear and transparent that they seemed almost within a stone’s throw of us, while the other side was still left in a shadow which was so deep as to be almost darkness. The gray lightened and lightened into pearl until a fringe of rose appeared, and then the sky suddenly changed to the softest blue, and a little later the snow-white mountain-tops were bathed in pink, and it was day.

I could see in the light that we were descending into a sort of upland hollow between the snow-patched mountain-tops; below us was

ELSKET

a lovely little valley in which small pines and birches grew, and patches of the green, short grass which stands for hay shone among the great boulders. Several little streams came jumping down as white as milk from the glaciers stuck between the mountain-tops, and after resting in two or three tiny lakes which looked like hand-mirrors lying in the grass below, went bubbling and foaming on to the edge of the precipice, over which they sprang, to be dashed into vapor and snow hundreds of feet down. A half-dozen sheep and as many goats were feeding about in the little valley; but I could not see the least sign of a house, except a queer, brown structure, on a little knoll, with many gables and peaks, ending in the curious dragon-pennants, which I recognized as one of the old Norsk wooden churches of a past age.

When, however, an hour later, we had got down to the table-land I found myself suddenly in front of a long, quaint, double-log cottage, set between two immense boulders, and roofed with layers of birch bark, covered with turf, which was blue with wild pansies. It was as if it were built under a bed of heart's-ease. It was very old, and had evidently been a house of some pretension, for there was much curious carving

BRED IN THE BONE

about the doors, and indeed about the whole front, the dragon's head being distinctly visible in the design. There were several lesser houses which looked as if they had once been dwellings, but they seemed now to be only stables.

As we approached the principal door it was opened, and there stepped forth one of the most striking figures I ever saw—a young woman, rather tall, and as straight as an arrow. My friend's words involuntarily recurred to me, "A daughter of the Vikings," and then, somehow, I too had the feeling he had expressed, "Poor thing!" Her figure was one of the richest and most perfect I ever beheld. Her face was singularly beautiful; but it was less her beauty than her nobility of look and mien combined with a certain sadness which impressed me. The features were clear and strong and perfectly carved. There was a firm mouth, a good jaw, strong chin, a broad brow, and deep blue eyes which looked straight at you. Her expression was so soft and tender as to have something pathetic in it. Her hair was flaxen, and as fine as satin, and was brushed perfectly smooth and coiled on the back of her shapely head, which was placed admirably on her

ELSKET

shoulders. She was dressed in the coarse, black-blue stuff of the country, and a kerchief, also dark-blue, was knotted under her chin, and fell back behind her head, forming a dark background for her silken hair.

Seeing us she stood perfectly still until we drew near, when she made a quaint, low courtesy and advanced to meet her father with a look of eager expectancy in her large eyes.

"Elsket," he said, with a tenderness which conveyed the full meaning of the sweet pet term, "darling."

There was something about these people, peasants though they were, which gave me a strange feeling of respect for them.

"This is Doctor John's friend," said the old man, quietly.

She looked at her father in a puzzled way for a moment, as if she had not heard him, but as he repeated his introduction a light came into her eyes, and coming up to me she held out her hand, saying, "Welcome."

Then turning to her father—"Have you a letter for me, father?" she asked.

"No, Elsket," he said, gently; "but I will go again next month."

A cloud settled on her face and increased

BRED IN THE BONE

its sadness, and she turned her head away. After a moment she went into the house and I saw that she was weeping. A look of deep dejection came over the old man's face also.

II

I FOUND that my friend, "Doctor John," strange to relate of a fisherman, had not exaggerated the merits of the fishing. How they got there, two thousand feet above the lower valley, I don't know; but trout fairly swarmed in the little streams, which boiled among the rocks, and they were as greedy as if they had never seen a fly in their lives. I shortly became contemptuous toward anything under three pounds, and addressed myself to the task of defending my flies against the smaller ones, and keeping them only for the big fellows, which ran over three pounds—the patriarchs of the streams. With these I had capital sport, for they knew every angle and hole, they sought every coign of vantage, and the rocks were so thick and so sharp that from the time one of these veterans took the fly, it was an equal contest which of us should come off victorious. I was often forced to rush

ELSKET

splashing and floundering through the water to my waist to keep my line from being sawed, and as the water was not an hour from the green glaciers above, it was not always entirely pleasant.

I soon made firm friends with my hosts, and varied the monotony of catching three-pounders by helping them get in their hay for the winter. Elsket, poor thing, was, notwithstanding her apparently splendid physique, so delicate that she could no longer stand the fatigue of manual labor, any extra exertion being liable to bring on a recurrence of the heart-failure, from which she had suffered. I learned that she had had a violent hemorrhage two summers before, from which she had come near dying, and that the skill of my friend, the doctor, had doubtless saved her life. This was the hold he had on Olaf of the Mountain: this was the "small service" he had rendered them.

By aiding them thus, I was enabled to be of material assistance to Olaf, and I found in helping these good people, that work took on once more the delight which I remembered it used to have under like circumstances when I was a boy. I could cut or carry on my back loads of hay all day, and feel at night as if I had been

BRED IN THE BONE

playing. Such is the singular effect of the spirit on labor.

To make up for this, Elsket would sometimes, when I went fishing, take her knitting and keep me company, sitting at a little distance. With her pale, calm face and shining hair outlined against the background of her sad-colored kerchief, she looked like a mourning angel. I never saw her smile except when her father came into her presence, and when she smiled it was as if the sun had suddenly come out. I began to understand the devotion of these two strange people, so like and yet so different.

One rainy day she had a strange turn; she began to be restless. Her large, sad eyes, usually so calm, became bright; the two spots in her cheeks burned yet deeper; her face grew anxious. Then she laid her knitting aside and took out of a great chest something on which she began to sew busily. I was looking at her, when she caught my eye and smiled. It was the first time she ever smiled for me. "Did you know I was going to be married?" she asked, just as an American girl might have done. And before I could answer, she brought me the work. It was her wedding dress. "I have nearly finished it," she said. Then she brought me a

ELSKET

box of old silver ornaments, such as the Norsk brides wear, and put them on. When I had admired them she put them away. After a little, she arose and began to wander about the house and out into the rain. I watched her with interest. Her father came in, and I saw a distressed look come into his eyes. He went up to her, and laying his hand on her drew her toward a seat. Then taking down an old Bible, he turned to a certain place and began to read. He read first the Psalm: "Lord, thou hast been our refuge, from one generation to another. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever the earth and the world were made, thou art God from everlasting, and world without end." Then he turned to the chapter of Corinthians, "Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept," etc. His voice was clear, rich, and devout, and he read it with singular earnestness and beauty. It gave me a strange feeling; it is a part of our burial service. Then he opened his hymn-book and began to sing a low, dirge-like hymn. I sat silent, watching the strange service and noting its effect on Elsket. She sat at first like a person bound, struggling to be free, then became quieter, and at last, perfectly calm. Then Olaf

BRED IN THE BONE

knelt down, and with his hand still on her prayed one of the most touching prayers I ever heard. It was for patience.

When he rose Elsket was weeping, and she went and leant in his arms like a child, and he kissed her as tenderly as if he had been her mother.

Next day, however, the same excited state recurred, and this time the reading appeared to have less effect. She sewed busily, and insisted that there must be a letter for her at L——. A violent fit of weeping was followed by a paroxysm of coughing, and finally the old man, who had sat quietly by her with his hand stroking her head, arose and said, “I will go.” She threw herself into his arms, rubbing her head against him in sign of dumb affection, and in a little while grew calm. It was still raining and quite late, only a little before sunset; but the old man went out, and taking the path toward L—— was soon climbing the mountain toward the Devil’s Seat. Elsket sat up all night, but she was as calm and as gentle as ever.

The next morning when Olaf returned she went out to meet him. Her look was full of eager expectancy. I did not go out, but watched her from the door. I saw Olaf shake his head, and heard her say bitterly, “It is so hard to

ELSKET

wait," and he said, gently, "Yes, it is, Elsket, but I will go again," and then she came in weeping quietly, the old man following with a tender look on his strong, weather-beaten face.

That day Elsket was taken ill. She had been trying to do a little work in the field in the afternoon, when a sinking spell had come on. It looked for a time as if the poor over-driven heart had knocked off work for good and all. Strong remedies, however, left by Doctor John, set it going again, and we got her to bed. She was still desperately feeble, and Olaf sat up. I could not leave him, so we were sitting watching, he one side the open platform fireplace in one corner, and I the other; he smoking, anxious, silent, grim; I watching the expression on his gray face. His eyes seemed set back deeper than ever under the shaggy gray brows, and as the fire-light fell on him he had the fierce, hopeless look of a caged eagle. It was late in the night before he spoke, and then it was half to himself and but half to me.

"I have fought it ten long years," he said, slowly.

Not willing to break the thread of his thought by speaking, I lit my pipe afresh and just looked at him. He received it as an answer.

"She is the last of them," he said, accepting

BRED IN THE BONE

me as an auditor rather than addressing me. "We go back to Olaf Traetelje, the blood of Harald Haarfager (the Fair-haired) is in our veins, and here it ends. Dane and Swede have known our power, Saxon and Celt have bowed bare-headed to us, and with her it ends. In this stronghold many times her fathers have found refuge from their foes and gained breathing-time after battles by sea and land. From this nest, like eagles, they have swooped down, carrying all before them, and here, at last, when betrayed and hunted, they found refuge. Here no foreign king could rule over them; here they learnt the lesson that Christ is the only king, and that all men are his brothers. Here they lived and worshipped him. If their dominions were stolen from them they found here a truer wealth, content; if they had not power, they had what was better, independence. For centuries they held this last remnant of the dominion which Harald Haarfager had conquered by land, and Eric of the Bloody Axe had won by sea, sending out their sons and daughters to people the lands; but the race dwindled as their lands had done before, and now with her dies the last. How has it come? As ever, by betrayal!"

ELSKET

The old man turned fiercely, his breast heaving, his eyes burning.

“Was she who came of a race at whose feet jarls have crawled and kings have knelt not good enough?” I was hearing the story and did not interrupt him—“Not good enough for him!” he continued in his low, fierce monotone. “I did not want him. What if he was a Saxon? His fathers were our boatmen. Rather Cnut a thousand times. Then the race would not have died. Then she would not be—not be so.”

The reference to her recalled him to himself, and he suddenly relapsed into silence.

“At least, Cnut paid the score,” he began once more, in a low, intense undertone. “In his arms he bore him down from the Devil’s Seat, a thousand feet sheer on the hard ice, where his cursed body lies crushed forever, a witness of his falsehood.”

I did not interrupt, and he rewarded my patience, giving a more connected account, for the first time addressing me directly.

“Her mother died when she was a child,” he said, softly. His gentle voice contrasted strangely with the fierce undertone in which he had been speaking. “I was mother as well as father to her. She was as good as she was

BRED IN THE BONE

beautiful, and each day she grew more and more so. She was a second Igenborg. Knowing that she needed other companionship than an old man, I sought and brought her Cnut (he spoke of him as if I must know all about him). Cnut was the son of my only kinsman, the last of his line as well, and he was tall and straight and strong. I loved him and he was my son, and as he grew I saw that he loved her, and I was not sorry, for he was goodly to look on, straight and tall as one of old, and he was good also. And she was satisfied with him, and from a child ordered him to do her girlish bidding, and he obeyed and laughed, well content to have her smile. And he would carry her on his shoulders, and take her on the mountain to slide, and would gather her flowers. And I thought it was well. And I thought that in time they would marry and have the farm, and that there would be children about the house, and the valley might be filled with their voices as in the old time. And I was content. And one day *he* came! (the reference cost him an effort). Cnut found him fainting on the mountain and brought him here in his arms. He had come to the village alone, and the idle fools there had told him of me, and he had asked to meet me,

ELSKET

and they told him of the mountain, and that none could pass the Devil's Ledge but those who had the old blood, and that I loved not strangers; and he said he would pass it, and he had come and passed safely the narrow ledge, and reached the Devil's Seat, when a stone had fallen upon him, and Cnut had found him there fainting, and had lifted him and brought him here, risking his own life to save him on the ledge. And he was near to death for days, and she nursed him and brought him from the grave.

“At first I was cold to him, but there was something about him that drew me and held me. It was not that he was young and taller than Cnut, and fair. It was not that his eyes were clear and full of light, and his figure straight as a young pine. It was not that he had climbed the mountain and passed the narrow ledge and the Devil's Seat alone, though I liked well his act; for none but those who have Harald Haarfager's blood have done it alone in all the years, though many have tried and failed. I asked him what men called him, and he said, ‘Harold’; then laughing, said some called him, ‘Harold the Fair-haired.’ The answer pleased me. There was something in

BRED IN THE BONE

the name which drew me to him. When I first saw him I had thought of Harald Haarfager, and of Harald Haardraarder, and of that other Harold, who, though a Saxon, died bravely for his kingdom when his brother betrayed him, and I held out my hand and gave him the clasp of friendship."

The old man paused, but after a brief reflection proceeded:

"We made him welcome and we loved him. He knew the world and could tell us many things. He knew the story of Norway and the Vikings, and the Sagas were on his tongue. Cnut loved him and followed him, and she (the pause which always indicated her who filled his thoughts)—she, then but a girl, laughed and sang for him, and he sang for her, and his voice was rich and sweet. And she went with him to fish and to climb, and often, when Cnut and I were in the field, we would hear her laugh, clear and fresh from the rocks beside the streams, as he told her some fine story of his England. He stayed here a month and a week, and then departed, saying he would come again next year, and the house was empty and silent after he left. But after a time we grew used to it once more and the winter came.

ELSKET

“When the spring returned we got a letter—a letter to her—saying he would come again, and every two weeks another letter came, and I went for it and brought it to—to her, and she read it to Cnut and me. And at last he came and I went to meet him, and brought him here, welcome as if he had been my eldest born, and we were glad. Cnut smiled and ran forward and gave him his hand, and—she—she did not come at first, but when she came she was clad in all that was her best, and wore her silver—the things her mother and her grandmother had worn, and as she stepped out of the door and saluted him, I saw for the first time that she was a woman grown, and it was hard to tell which face was brighter, hers or his, and Cnut smiled to see her so glad.”

The old man relapsed into reflection. Presently, however, he resumed:

“This time he was gayer than before:—the summer seemed to come with him. He sang to her and read to her from books that he had brought, teaching her to speak English like himself, and he would go and fish up the streams while she sat near by and talked to him. Cnut also learned his tongue well, and I did also, but Cnut did not see so much of him as before, for

BRED IN THE BONE

Cnut had to work, and in the evening they were reading and she—she—grew more and more beautiful, and laughed and sang more. And so the summer passed. The autumn came, but he did not go, and I was well content, for she was happy, and, in truth, the place was cheerier that he was here. Cnut alone seemed downcast, but I knew not why; and then the snow came. One morning we awoke and the farm was as white as the mountains. I said to him, ‘Now you are here for the winter,’ and he laughed and said, ‘No, I will stay till the New Year. I have business then in England, and I must go.’ And I turned, and her face was like sunshine, for she knew that none but Cnut and I had ever passed the Devil’s Ledge in the snow, and the other way by which I took the Doctor home was worse then, though easier in the summer, only longer. But Cnut looked gloomy, at which I chid him; but he was silent. And the autumn passed rapidly, so cheerful was he, finding in the snow as much pleasure as in the sunshine, and taking her out to slide and race on shoes till she would come in with her cheeks like roses in summer, and her eyes like stars, and she made it warm where she was.

“And one evening they came home. He was

ELSKET

gayer than ever, and she more beautiful, but silenter than her wont. She looked like her mother the evening I asked her to be my wife. I could not take my eyes from her. That night Cnut was a caged wolf. At last he asked me to come out, and then he told me that he had seen Harold kiss her and had heard him tell her that he loved her, and she had not driven him away. My heart was wrung for Cnut, for I loved him, and he wept like a child. I tried to comfort him, but it was useless, and the next day he went away for a time. I was glad to have him go, for I grieved for him, and I thought she would miss him and be glad when he came again, and though the snow was bad on the mountain he was sure as a wolf. He bade us good-by and left with his eyes looking like a hurt dog's. I thought she would have wept to have him go, but she did not. She gave him her hand and turned back to Harold, and smiled to him when he smiled. It was the first time in all her life that I had not been glad to have her smile, and I was sorry Harold had stayed, and I watched Cnut climb the mountain like a dark speck against the snow till he disappeared. She was so happy and beautiful that I could not long be out with her, though I grieved for Cnut, and

BRED IN THE BONE

when she came to me and told me one night of her great love for Harold I forgot my own regret in her joy, and I said nothing to Harold because she told me he said that in his country it was not usual for the father to be told or to speak to a daughter's lover.

“They were much taken up together after that, and I was alone, and I missed Cnut sorely, and would have longed for him more but for her happiness. But one day, when he had been gone two months, I looked over the mountain, and on the snow I saw a black speck. It had not been there before, and I watched it as it moved, and I knew it was Cnut.

“I said nothing until he came, and then I ran and met him. He was thin, and worn, and older; but his eyes had a look in them which I thought was joy at getting home; only they were not soft, and he looked taller than when he left, and he spoke little. His eyes softened when she, hearing his voice, came out and held out her hand to him, smiling to welcome him; but he did not kiss her as kinsfolk do after long absence, and when Harold came out the wolf-look came back into his eyes. Harold looked not so pleased to see him, but held out his hand to greet him. But Cnut stepped back, and sud-

ELSKET

denly drawing from his breast a letter placed it in his palm, saying slowly, 'I have been to England, Lord Harold, and have brought you this from your Lady Ethelfrid Penrith—they expect you to your wedding at the New Year.' Harold turned as white as the snow under his feet, and she gave a cry and fell full length on the ground.

"Cnut was the first to reach her, and lifting her in his arms he bore her into the house. Harold would have seized her, but Cnut brushed him aside as if he had been a barley-straw, and carried her and laid her down. When she came to herself she did not remember clearly what had happened. She was strange to me who was her father, but she knew him. I could have slain him, but she called him. He went to her, and she understood only that he was going away, and she wept. He told her it was true that he had loved another woman and had promised to marry her, before he had met her, but now he loved her better, and he would go home and arrange everything and return; and she listened and clung to him. I hated him and wanted him to go, but he was my guest, and I told him that he could not go through the snow; but he was determined. It seemed as if he

BRED IN THE BONE

wanted now to get away, and I was glad to have him go, for my child was strange to me, and if he had deceived one woman I knew he might another, and Cnut said that the letter he had sent by him before the snow came was to say he would come in time to be married at the New Year; and Cnut said he lived in a great castle and owned broad lands, more than one could see from the whole mountain, and his people had brought him in and asked him many questions of him, and had offered him gold to bring the letter back, and he had refused the gold, and brought it without the gold; and some said he had deceived more than one woman. And Lord Harold went to get ready, and she wept, and moaned, and was strange. And then Cnut went to her and told her of his own love for her, and that he was loyal to her, but she waved him from her, and when he asked her to marry him, for he loved her truly, she said him nay with violence, so that he came forth into the air looking white as a leper. And he sat down, and when I came out he was sitting on a stone, and had his knife in his hand, looking at it with a dangerous gleam in his eyes; and just then she arose and came out, and, seeing him sitting so with his knife, she gave a start, and her manner changed, and going to him she spoke

ELSKET

softly to him for the first time, and made him yield her up the knife; for she knew that the knife hung loose in the sheath. But then she changed again and all her anger rose against Cnut, that he had brought Harold the letter which carried him away, and Cnut sat saying nothing, and his face was like stone. Then Lord Harold came and said he was ready, and he asked Cnut would he carry his luggage. And Cnut at first refused, and then suddenly looked him full in his face, and said, 'Yes.' And Harold entered the house to say good-by to her, and I heard her weeping within, and my heart grew hard against the Englishman, and Cnut's face was black with anger, and when Harold came forth I heard her cry out, and he turned in the door and said he would return and would write her a letter to let her know when he would return. But he said it as one speaks to a child to quiet it, not meaning it. And Cnut went in to speak to her, and I heard her drive him out as if he had been a dog, and he came forth with his face like a wolf's, and taking up Lord Harold's luggage, he set out. And so they went over the mountain.

“And all that night she lay awake, and I heard her moaning, and all next day she sat

BRED IN THE BONE

like stone, and I milked the goats, and her thoughts were on the letters he would send.

“I spoke to her, but she spoke only of the letters to come, and I kept silence, for I had seen that Lord Harold would come no more; for I had seen him burn the little things she had given him, and he had taken everything away, but I could not tell her so. And the days passed, and I hoped that Cnut would come straight back; but he did not. It grieved me, for I loved him, and hoped that he would return, and that in time she would forget Lord Harold, and not be strange, but be as she had been to Cnut before he came. Yet I thought it not wholly wonderful that Cnut did not return at once, nor unwise; for she was lonely, and would sit all day looking up the mountain, and when he came she would, I thought, be glad to have him back.

“At the end of a week she began to urge me to go for a letter. But I told her it could not come so soon; but when another week had passed she began to sew, and when I asked her what she sewed, she said her bridal dress, and she became so that I agreed to go for I knew no letter would come, and it broke my heart to see her. And when I was ready she kissed me,

ELSKET

and wept in my arms, and called me her good father; and so I started.

“She stood in the door and watched me climb the mountain, and waved to me almost gayly.

“The snow was deep, but I followed the track which Cnut and the Englishman had made two weeks before, for no new snow had fallen, and I saw that one track was ever behind the other, and never beside it, as if Cnut had fallen back and followed behind him.

“And so I came near the Devil’s Seat, where it was difficult, and where Cnut had brought him in his arms that day, and then, for the first time, I began to fear, for I remembered Cnut’s look as he came from the house when she waved him off, and it had been so easy for him with a swing of his strong arm to have pushed the other over the cliff. But when I saw that he had driven his stick in deep to hold hard, and that the tracks went on beyond, I breathed freely again, and so I passed the narrow path, and the black wall, and came to the Devil’s Seat and as I turned the rock my heart stopped beating, and I had nearly fallen from the ledge. For there, scattered and half-buried in the snow, lay the pack Cnut had carried on his back, and the snow was all dug up and piled about as if stags had

BRED IN THE BONE

been fighting there for their lives. From the wall, across and back, were deep furrows, as if they were ploughed by men's feet dug fiercely in; but they were ever deeper toward the edge, and on one spot at the edge the snow was all torn clear from the black rock, and beyond the seat the narrow path lay smooth, and bright, and level as it had fallen, without a track. My knees shook under me, and I clutched my stick for support, and everything grew black before me: and presently I fell on my knees and crawled and peered over the edge. But there was nothing to be seen, only where the wall slants sharp down for a little space in one spot the snow was brushed away as if something had struck there, and the black, smooth rock showed clean, cutting off the sight from the glacier a thousand feet down."

The old man's breast heaved. It was evidently a painful narrative, but he kept on.

"I sat down in the snow and thought; for I could not think at once. Cnut had not wished to murder, or else he had flung the Englishman from the narrow ledge with one blow of his strong arm. He had waited until they had stood on the Devil's Seat, and then he had thrown off his pack and faced him, man to man. The Englishman was strong and active,

ELSKET

taller and heavier than Cnut. He had Harald's name, but he had not Harald's heart nor blood, and Cnut had carried him in his arms over the cliff, with his false heart like water in his body.

"I sat there all day and into the night; for I knew that he would betray no one more. I sorrowed for Cnut, for he was my very son. And after a time I would have gone back to her, but I thought of her at home waiting and watching for me with a letter, and I could not; and then I wept, and I wished that I were Cnut, for I knew that he had had one moment of joy when he took the Englishman in his arms. And then I took the scattered things from the snow and threw them over the cliff; for I would not let it be known that Cnut had flung the Englishman over. It would be talked about over the mountain, and Cnut would be thought a murderer by those who did not know, and some would say he had done it foully; and so I went on over the mountain, and told it there that Cnut and the Englishman had gone over the cliff together in the snow on their way, and it was thought that a slip of snow had carried them. And I came back and told her only that no letter had come."

He was silent so long that I thought he had

BRED IN THE BONE

ended; but presently, in a voice so low that it was just like a whisper, he added: "I thought she would forget, but she has not, and every fortnight she begins to sew her dress and I go over the mountains to give her peace; for each time she draws nearer to the end, and wears away more and more; and some day the thin blade will snap."

"The thin blade" was already snapping, and even while he was speaking the last fibres were giving way.

The silence which followed his words was broken by Elsket; I heard a strange sound, and Elsket called feebly, "Oh, father."

Olaf went quickly to her bedside. I heard him say, "My God in Heaven!" and I sprang up and joined him. It was a hemorrhage. Her life-blood was flowing from her lips. She could not last like that ten minutes.

Providentially the remedies provided by Doctor John were right at hand, and, thanks to them, the crimson tide was stayed before life went out; but it was soon apparent that her strength was gone and her power exhausted.

We worked over her, but her pulse was running like a broken clock. There was no time to have got a physician, even had there been one to get. I mentioned it; Olaf shook his head.

ELSKET

“She is in the hands of God,” he said.

Olaf never left the bedside except to heat water or get some stimulant for her.

But, notwithstanding every effort, she failed to rally. The overtaxed heart was giving out, and all day she sank steadily. I never saw such a desperate face as that old man's. It haunts me now. He hung over her. He held her hand, now growing cold, against his cheek to keep it warm—stroked it and kissed it. As toward evening the short, quick breaths came, which precede dissolution, he sank on his knees. At first, he buried his face in his hands; then in the agony of his despair, he began to speak aloud. I never heard a more moving appeal. It was a man speaking face to face with God for one about to enter His presence. His eyes were wide open, as if he saw His face. He did not ask that she should be spared to him; it was all for his “Elska,” his “Darling,” that Jesus would be her “Herder,” and lead her beside the still waters; that she might be spared all suffering and sorrow, and have peace.

Presently he ended and buried his face in his hands. The quick, faint breaths had died away, and as I looked on the still white face on the pillow I thought that she had gone. But suddenly the large eyes slowly opened wide.

BRED IN THE BONE

"Father," she said, faintly.

"Elsket," the old man bent over her eagerly.

"I am so tired."

"My Elsket."

"I love you."

"Yes, my Elsket."

"You will stay with me?"

"Yes, always."

"If Cnut comes?"

"Yes, my Elsket."

"If Cnut comes——" very faintly.

Her true lover's name was the last on her lips.

He bent his ear to her lips. "Yes?"

But we never knew just what she wanted. The dim, large eyes closed, and then the lids lifted slowly a little; there was a sigh, and Elsket's watching was over; the weary spirit was at peace.

"She is with God," he said, calmly.

I closed the white lids gently, and moved out. Later I offered to help him, but he said "No," and I remained out of doors till the afternoon.

About sunset he appeared and went up toward the old church, and I went into the house. I found that he had laid her out in the large room, and she lay with her face slightly turned as if asleep. She was dressed like a bride in the

ELSKET

bridal dress she had sewn so long; her hair was unbound, and lay about her, fine and silken, and she wore the old silver ornaments she had showed me. No bride had ever a more faithful attendant. He had put them all upon her.

After a time, as he did not come back, I went to look for him. As I approached I heard a dull, thumping sound. When I reached the cleared place I found him digging. He had chosen a spot just in front of the quaint old door, with the rude, runic letters, which the earliest sunbeams would touch. As I came up I saw he was digging her grave. I offered to help, but he said "No." So I carried him some food and placing it near him left him.

Late that evening he came down and asked me if I would sit up that night. I told him, yes. He thanked me and went into the house. In a little while he came out and silently went up the path toward the mountain.

It was a strange night that I spent in that silent valley in that still house, only I and the dead girl lying there so white and peaceful. I had strange thoughts, and the earth and things earthly disappeared for me that night shut in by those mountain walls. I was in a world alone. I was cut off from all but God and the

BRED IN THE BONE

dead. I have dear ones in heaven, and I was nearer to them that night, amid the mountain-tops of Norway, than I was to earthly friends. I think I was nearer to heaven that night than I ever shall be again till I get there.

Day broke like a great pearl, but I did not heed it. It was all peace.

Suddenly there was a step outside, and Olaf, with his face drawn and gray, and bowing under the weight of the burden upon his shoulder, stepped wearily in at the door.

To do Elsket honor, he had been over the mountain to get it. I helped lift it down and place it, and then he waited for me to go. As I passed out of the door, I saw him bend over the quiet sleeper. I looked in later; he had placed her in the coffin, but the top was not on, and he was on his knees beside her.

He did not bury her that day; but he never left her side: he sat by her all day and all night. Next day he came to the door and looked at me. I went in and understood that he wanted me to look for the last time on her face. It was fairer than I ever saw it. He had cut her flowers and placed them all about her, and on her breast was a small packet of letters. All care, all suffering, all that was merely of the earth, were

ELSKET

cleansed away, and she looked as she lay, like a dead angel. After I came out I heard him fastening on the top, and when he finished I went in again. He would have attempted to carry it by himself, but I restrained him, and without a word he took the head and I the foot, and so lifting her tenderly we went gently out and up toward the church. We had to pause and rest several times, for he was almost worn out. After we had lowered her into the grave I was in doubt what to do; but Olaf drew from his coat his two books, and standing close by the side of the grave he opened first the little Bible and began to read in a low but distinct voice: "Lord, thou hast been our refuge, from one generation to another. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever the earth and the world were made, thou art God from everlasting, and world without end."

When he finished this he turned and read again: "Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept," etc. They were the Psalm and the chapter which I had heard him read to Elsket that first day when she became excited, and with which he had so often charmed her restless spirit.

He closed, and I thought he was done, but

BRED IN THE BONE

he opened his hymn-book and turning over a few leaves sang the same hymn he had sung to her that day. He sang it all through to the end, the low, strange, dirge-like hymn, and chanted as it was by that old man alone, standing in the fading evening light beside the grave which he had dug for his daughter, the last of his race, I never heard anything so moving. Then he knelt, and clasping his hands offered a prayer. The words, from habit, ran almost as they had done when he had prayed for Elsket before, that God would be her Shepherd, her "Herder," and lead her beside the still waters, and give her peace.

When he was through I waited a little, and then I took up a spade to help him; but he reached out and took it quietly, and seeing that he wanted to be alone I left him. He meant to do for Elsket all the last sacred offices himself.

I was so fatigued that on reaching the house I dropped off to sleep and slept till morning, and I do not know when he came into the house, if he came at all. When I waked early next morning he was not there, and I rose and went up to the church to hunt for him. He was sitting quietly beside the grave, and I saw that he

ELSKET

had placed at her head a little cross of birch-wood, on which he had burned one word, simply,

“ELSKET.”

I spoke to him, asking him to come to the house.

“I cannot leave her,” he said; but when I urged him he rose silently and returned with me.

I remained with him for a while after that, and each day he went and sat by the grave. At last I had to leave. I urged him to come with me, but he replied always, “No, I must watch over Elsket.”

It was late in the evening when we set off to cross the mountain. We came by the same path by which I had gone, Olaf leading me as carefully and holding me as steadily as when I went over before. I stopped at the church to lay a few wild flowers on the little gray mound where Elsket slept so quietly. Olaf said not a word; he simply waited till I was done and then followed me dumbly. I was so filled with sorrow for him that I did not, except in one place, think much of the fearful cliffs along which we made our way. At the Devil’s Seat,

BRED IN THE BONE

indeed, my nerves for a moment seemed shaken and almost gave way as I thought of the false young lord whose faithlessness had caused all the misery to these simple, kindly folk, and of the fierce young Norseman who had there found so sweet a revenge. But we came on and passed the ledge, and descending struck the broader path just after the day broke, where it was no longer perilous but only painful.

There Olaf paused. "I will go back if you don't want me," he said. I did not need his services, but I urged him to come on with me—to pay a visit to his friends. "I have none," he said, simply. Then to come home with me and live with me in old Virginia. He said, "No," he "must watch over Elsket." So finally I had to give in, and with a clasp of the hand and a message to "her friend" Doctor John, to "remember Elsket," he went back and was soon lost amid the rocks.

I was half-way down when I reached a cleared place an hour or so later, and turned to look back. The sharp angle of the Devil's Ledge was the highest point visible, the very pinnacle of the mountain, and there, clear against the burnished steel of the morning sky, on the very edge, clear in the rare atmosphere was a small

ELSKET

figure. It stood for a second, a black point distinctly outlined, and then disappeared.

It was Olaf of the Mountain, gone back to keep watch over Elsket.

A SOLDIER OF THE EMPIRE

A SOLDIER OF THE EMPIRE¹

IT was his greatest pride in life that he had been a soldier—a soldier of the empire. He was known simply as “The Soldier,” and it is probable that there was not a man or woman, and certain that there was not a child in the Quarter who did not know him: the tall, erect old Sergeant with his white, carefully waxed moustache, and his face seamed with two sabre cuts. One of these cuts, all knew, had been received the summer day when he had stood, a mere boy, in the hollow square at Waterloo, striving to stay the fierce flood of the “men on the white horses”; the other, tradition said, was of even more ancient date.

Yes, they all knew him, and knew how when he was not over thirteen, just the age of little Raoul, the humpback, who was not as tall as Pauline, he had received the cross which he always wore over his heart sewed in the breast of his coat, from the hand of the emperor him-

¹ From “Elsket and other Stories.” Copyright 1891, By Charles Scribner’s Sons.

BRED IN THE BONE

self, for standing on the hill at Wagram when his regiment broke, and beating the long-roll, whilst he held the tattered colors resting in his arm, until the men rallied and swept back the left wing of the enemy. This the children knew, as their fathers and mothers and grandfathers and grandmothers before them had known it, and rarely an evening passed that some of the gamins were not to be found in the old man's kitchen, which was also his parlor, or else on his little porch, listening with ever-new delight to the story of his battles and of the emperor. They all knew as well as he the thrilling part where the emperor dashed by (the old Sergeant always rose reverently at the name, and the little audience also stood,—one or two nervous younger ones sometimes bobbing up a little ahead of time, but sitting down again in confusion under the contemptuous scowls and pluckings of the rest),—where the emperor dashed by, and reined up to ask an officer what regiment that was that had broken, and who was that drummer that had been promoted to ensign;—they all knew how, on the grand review afterwards, the Sergeant, beating his drum with one hand (while the other, which had been broken by a bullet, was in a

A SOLDIER OF THE EMPIRE

sling), had marched with his company before the emperor, and had been recognized by him. They knew how he had been called up by a staff-officer (whom the children imagined to be a fine gentleman with a rich uniform, and a great shako like Marie's uncle, the drum-major), and how the emperor had taken from his own breast and with his own hand had given him the cross, which he had never from that day removed from his heart, and had said, "I would make you a colonel if I could spare you."

This was the story they liked best, though there were many others which they frequently begged to be told—of march and siege and battle, of victories over or escapes from red-coated Britishers and fierce German lancers, and of how the mere presence of the emperor was worth fifty thousand men, and how the soldiers knew that where he was no enemy could withstand them. It all seemed to them very long ago, and the soldier of the empire was the only man in the Quarter who was felt to be greater than the rich nobles and fine officers who flashed along the great streets, or glittered through the boulevards and parks outside. More than once when Paris was stirred up, and the Quarter seemed on the eve of an outbreak,

BRED IN THE BONE

a mounted orderly had galloped up to his door with a letter, requesting his presence somewhere (it was whispered, at the prefect's), and when he returned, if he refused to speak of his visit the Quarter was satisfied; it trusted him and knew that when he advised quiet it was for its good. He loved France first, the Quarter next. Had he not been offered—? What had he not been offered! The Quarter knew, or fancied it knew, which did quite as well. At least, it knew how he always took sides with the Quarter against oppression. It knew how he had gone up into the burning tenement and brought the children down out of the garret just before the roof fell. It knew how he had jumped into the river that winter when it was full of ice, to save Raoul's little lame dog which had fallen into the water; it knew how he had reported the gendarmes for arresting poor little Aimée just for begging a man in the Place de L'Opéra for a franc for her old grandmother, who was blind, and how he had her released instead of being sent to——. But what was the need of multiplying instances! He was "the Sergeant," a soldier of the empire, and there was not a dog in the Quarter which did not feel and look proud when it could trot on the inside of the sidewalk by him.

A SOLDIER OF THE EMPIRE

Thus the old Sergeant came to be regarded as the conservator of order in the Quarter, and was worth more in the way of keeping it quiet than all the gendarmes that ever came inside its precincts. And thus the children all knew him.

One story that the Sergeant sometimes told, the girls liked to hear, though the boys did not, because it had nothing about war in it, and Minette and Clarisse used to cry so when it was told, that the Sergeant would stop and put his arms around them and pet them until they only sobbed on his shoulder.

It was of how he had, when a lonely old man, met down in Lorraine his little Camille, whose eyes were as blue as the sky, and her hand as white as the flower from which she took her name, and her cheeks as pink as the roses in the gardens of the Tuileries. He had loved her, and she, though forty years his junior, had married him and had come here to live with him; but the close walls of the city had not suited her, and she had pined and languished before his eyes like a plucked lily, and, after she bore him Pierre, had died in his arms, and left him lonelier than before. And the old soldier always lowered his voice and paused a moment (Raoul said he was saying a mass), and then he would add consolingly: "But she left a soldier, and

BRED IN THE BONE

when I am gone, should France ever need one, Pierre will be here." The boys did not fancy this story for the reasons given, and besides, although they loved the Sergeant, they did not like Pierre. Pierre was not popular in the Quarter,—except with the young girls and a few special friends. The women said he was idle and vain like his mother, who had been, they said, a silly, lazy thing with little to boast of but blue eyes and a white skin, of which she was too proud to endanger it by work, and that she had married the Sergeant for his pension, and would have ruined him if she had lived, and that Pierre was just like her.

The children knew nothing of the resemblance. They disliked Pierre because he was cross and disagreeable to them, and however their older sisters might admire his curling brown hair, his dark eyes, and delicate features, which he had likewise inherited from his mother, they did not like him; for he always scolded when he came home and found them there; and he had several times ordered the whole lot out of the house; and once he had slapped little Raoul, for which Jean Maison had beaten him. Of late, too, when it drew near the hour for him to come home, the old Sergeant had two or three times

A SOLDIER OF THE EMPIRE

left out a part of his story, and had told them to run away and come back in the morning, as Pierre liked to be quiet when he came from his work—which Raoul said was gambling.

Thus it was that Pierre was not popular in the Quarter.

He was nineteen years old when war was declared.

They said Prussia was trying to rob France,—to steal Alsace and Lorraine. All Paris was in an uproar. The Quarter, always ripe for any excitement, shared in and enjoyed the general commotion. It struck off from work. It was like the commune; at least, so people said. Pierre was the loudest declaimer in the district. He got work in the armory. Recruiting officers went in and out of the saloons and cafés, drinking with the men, talking to the women, and stirring up as much fervor as possible. It needed little to stir it. The Quarter was seething. Troops were being mustered in, and the streets and parks were filled with the tramp of regiments; and the roll of the drums, the call of the bugles, and the cheers of the crowds as they marched by floated into the Quarter. Brass bands were so common that although in the winter a couple of strolling musicians had been

BRED IN THE BONE

sufficient to lose temporarily every child in the Quarter, it now required a full band and a grenadier regiment, to boot, to draw a tolerable representation.

Of all the residents of the Quarter, none took a deeper interest than the soldier of the empire. He became at once an object of more than usual attention. He had married in Lorraine, and could, of course, tell just how long it would take to whip the Prussians. He thought a single battle would decide it. It would if the emperor were there. His little court was always full of inquirers, and the stories of the emperor were told to audiences now of grandfathers and grandmothers. Once or twice the gendarmes had sauntered down, thinking, from seeing the crowd, that a fight was going on. They had stayed to hear of the emperor. A hint was dropped by the soldier of the empire that perhaps France would conquer Prussia, and then go on across to Moscow to settle an old score, and that night it was circulated through the Quarter that the invasion of Russia would follow the capture of Berlin. The emperor became more popular than he had been since the *coup d'état*. Half the Quarter offered its services.

A SOLDIER OF THE EMPIRE

The troops were being drilled night and day, and morning after morning the soldier of the empire locked his door, buttoned his coat tightly around him, and with a stately military air marched over to the park to see the drill, where he remained until it was time for Pierre to have his supper.

The old Sergeant's acquaintance extended far beyond the Quarter. Indeed, his name had been mentioned in the papers more than once, and his presence was noted at the drill by those high in authority; so that he was often to be seen surrounded by a group listening to his accounts of the emperor, or showing what the *manuel* had been in his time. His air, always soldierly, was now imposing, and many a visitor of distinction inquiring who he might be, and learning that he was a soldier of the empire, sought an introduction to him. Sometimes they told him that they could hardly believe him so old, could hardly believe him much older than some of those in the ranks, and although at first he used to declare he was like a rusty flint-lock, too old and useless for service, their flattery soothed his vanity, and after a while, instead of shaking his head and replying as he did at first that France had no use for old men,

BRED IN THE BONE

he would smile doubtfully and say that when they let Pierre go, maybe he would go too, "just to show the children how they fought then."

The summer came. The war began in earnest. The troops were sent to the front, the crowds shouting, "On to Berlin." Others were mustered in and sent after them as fast as they were equipped. News of battle after battle came; at first, of victory (so the papers said), full and satisfying, then meagre and uncertain, and at last so scanty that only the wise ones knew there had been a defeat. The Quarter was in a fever of patriotism. Jean Maison and nearly all the young men had enlisted and gone, leaving their sweethearts by turns waving their kerchiefs and wiping their eyes with them. Pierre, however, still remained behind. He said he was working for the Government. Raoul said he was not working at all; that he was skulking.

Suddenly the levy came. Pierre was conscripted.

That night the Sergeant enlisted in the same company. Before the week was out, their regiment was equipped and dispatched to the front, for the news came that the army was making no advance, and it was said that France needed

A SOLDIER OF THE EMPIRE

more men. Some shook their heads and said that was not what she needed, that what she needed was better officers. A suggestion of this by some of the recruits in the old Sergeant's presence drew from him the rebuke that in his day "such a speech would have called out a corporal and a file of grenadiers."

The day they were mustered in, the captain of the company sent for him and bade him have the first sergeant's chevrons sewed on his sleeve. The order had come from the colonel, some even said from the marshal. In the Quarter it was said that it came from the emperor. The Sergeant suggested that Pierre was the man for the place; but the captain simply repeated the order. The Quarter approved the selection, and several fights occurred among the children who had gotten up a company as to who should be the sergeant. It was deemed more honorable than to be the captain.

The day the regiment left Paris, the Sergeant was ordered to report several reliable men for special duty; he detailed Pierre among the number. Pierre was sick, so sick that when the company started he would have been left behind but for his father. The old soldier was too proud of his son to allow him to miss the

BRED IN THE BONE

opportunity of fighting for France. Pierre was the handsomest man in the regiment.

The new levies on arrival in the field went into camp, in and near some villages and were drilled,—quite needlessly, Pierre and some of the others declared. They were not accustomed to restraint, and they could not see why they should be worked to death when they were lying in camp doing nothing. But the soldier of the empire was a strict drill-master, and the company was shortly the best-drilled one in the regiment.

Yet the army lay still: they were not marching on to Berlin. The sole principle of the campaign seemed to be the massing together of as many troops as possible. What they were to do no one appeared very clearly to know. What they were doing all knew: they were doing nothing. The men, at first burning for battle, became cold or lukewarm with waiting; dissatisfaction crept in, and then murmurs: “Why did they not fight?” The soldier of the empire himself was sorely puzzled. The art of war had clearly changed since his day. The emperor would have picked the best third of these troops and have been at the gates of the Prussian capital in less time than they had spent

A SOLDIER OF THE EMPIRE

camped with the enemy right before them. Still, it was not for a soldier to question, and he reported for a week's extra guard duty a man who ventured to complain in his presence that the marshal knew as little as the men. Extra guard duty did no good. The army was losing heart.

Thus it was for several weeks. But at last, one evening, it was apparent that some change was at hand: the army stirred and shook itself as a great animal moves and stretches, not knowing if it will awake or drop off to sleep again.

During the night it became wide awake. It was high time. The Prussians were almost on them. They had them in a trap. They held the higher grounds and hemmed the French in. All night long the tents were being struck, and the army was in commotion. No one knew just why it was. Some said they were about to be attacked; some said they were surrounded. Uncertainty gave place to excitement. At length they marched.

When day began to break, the army had been tumbled into line of battle, and the regiment in which the old Sergeant and Pierre were was drawn up on the edge of a gentleman's park

BRED IN THE BONE

outside of the villages. The line extended beyond them farther than they could see, and large bodies of troops were massed behind them, and were marching and countermarching in clouds of dust. The rumor went along the ranks that they were in the advanced line, and that the Germans were just the other side of the little plateau, which they could dimly see in the gray light of the dawn. The men, having been marching in the dark, were tired, and most of them lay down, when they were halted, to rest. Some went to sleep; others, like Pierre, set to work and with their bayonets dug little trenches and threw up a slight earthwork before them, behind which they could lie; for the skirmishers had been thrown out, looking vague and ghostly as they trotted forward in the dim twilight, and they supposed that the battle would be fought right there. By the time, however, that the trenches were dug, the line was advanced, and the regiment was moved forward some distance, and was halted just under a knoll along which ran a road. The Sergeant was the youngest man in the company; the sound of battle had brought back all his fire. To him numbers were nothing. He thought it now but a matter of a few hours, and France would be

A SOLDIER OF THE EMPIRE

at the gates of Berlin. He saw once more the field of glory and heard again the shout of victory; Lorraine would be saved; he beheld the tricolor floating over the capital of the enemies of France. Perhaps, it would be planted there by Pierre. And he saw in his imagination Pierre climbing at a stride from a private to a captain, a colonel, a—! who could tell?—had not the *baton* been won in a campaign? As to dreaming that a battle could bring any other result than victory!—It was impossible!

“Where are you going?” shouted derisively the men of a regiment at rest, to the Sergeant’s command as they marched past.

“To Berlin,” replied the Sergeant.

The reply evoked cheers, and that regiment that day stood its ground until a fourth of its men fell. The old soldier’s enthusiasm infected the new recruits, who were pale and nervous under the strain of waiting. His eye rested on Pierre, who was standing down near the other end of the company, and the father’s face beamed as he thought he saw there resolution and impatience for the fight. Ha! France should ring with his name; the Quarter should go wild with delight.

Just then the skirmishers ahead began to

BRED IN THE BONE

fire, and in a few moments it was answered by a sullen note from the villages beyond the plain, and the battle had begun. The dropping fire of the skirmish line increased and merged into a rattle, and suddenly the thunder broke from a hill to their right, and ran along the crest until the earth trembled under their feet. Bullets began to whistle over their heads and clip the leaves of the trees beyond them, and the long, pulsating scream of shells flying over them and exploding in the park behind them made the faces of the men look gray in the morning twilight. Waiting was worse than fighting. It told on the young men.

In a little while a staff-officer galloped up to the colonel, who was sitting on his horse in the road, quietly smoking a cigar, and a moment later the whole line was in motion. They were wheeled to the right, and marched under shelter of the knoll in the direction of the firing. As they passed the turn of the road, they caught a glimpse of the hill ahead where the artillery, enveloped in smoke, was thundering from an ever-thickening cloud. A battery of eight guns galloped past them, and turning the curve disappeared in a cloud of dust. To the new recruits it seemed as if the whole battle was being fought right there. They could see

A SOLDIER OF THE EMPIRE

nothing but their own line, and only a part of that; smoke and dust hid everything else; but the hill was plainly an important point, for they were being pushed forward, and the firing on the rise ahead of them was terrific. They were still partly protected by the ridge, but shells were screaming over them, and the earth was rocking under their feet. More batteries came thundering by,—the men clinging to the pieces and the drivers lashing their horses furiously, —and disappearing into the smoke on the hill, unlimbered and swelled the deafening roar; they passed men lying on the ground dead or wounded, or were passed by others helping wounded comrades to the rear. Several men in the company fell, some crying out or groaning with pain, and two or three killed outright.

The men were dodging and twisting, with heads bent forward a little as if in a pelting rain. Only the old Sergeant and some of the younger ones were perfectly erect.

“Why don’t you dodge the balls?” asked a recruit of the Sergeant.

“A soldier of the empire never dodges,” was the proud reply.

Some change occurred on the hills; they could not see what. Just then the order came down

BRED IN THE BONE

the line to advance at a double-quick and support the batteries. They moved forward at a run and passed beyond the shelter of the ridge. Instantly they were in the line of fire from the Prussian batteries, whose white puffs of smoke were visible across the plain, and bullets and shell tore wide spaces in their ranks. They could not see the infantrymen, who were in pits, but the bullets hissed and whistled by them. The men on both sides of Pierre were killed and fell forward on their faces with a thud, one of them still clutching his musket. Pierre would have stopped, but there was no time, the men in the rear pressed him on. As they appeared in the smoke of the nearest battery, the artillerymen broke into cheers at the welcome sight, and all down the line it was taken up. All around were dead and dying men increasing in numbers momentarily. No one had time to notice them. Some of them had blankets thrown over them. The infantry, who were a little to the side of the batteries, were ordered to lie down; most of them had already done so; even then they were barely protected; shot and shell ploughed the ground around them as if it had been a fallow field; men spoke to their comrades, and before receiving a reply were

A SOLDIER OF THE EMPIRE

shot dead at their sides. The wounded were more ghastly than the dead; their faces growing suddenly deadly white from the shock as they were struck.

The gunners lay in piles around their guns, and still the survivors worked furiously in the dense heat and smoke, the sweat pouring down their blackened faces. The fire was terrific.

Suddenly an officer galloped up, and spoke to the lieutenant of the nearest battery.

"Where is the colonel?"

"Killed."

"Where is your captain?"

"Dead, there under the gun."

"Are you in command?"

"I suppose so."

"Well, hold this hill."

"How long?"

"Forever." And he galloped off.

His voice was heard clear and ringing in a sudden lull, and the old Sergeant, clutching his musket, shouted:

"We will, forever."

There was a momentary lull.

Suddenly the cry was:

"Here they are."

In an instant a dark line of men appeared

BRED IN THE BONE

coming up the slope. The guns were trained down on them, but shot over their heads; they were double shotted and trained lower, and belched forth canister. They fell in swathes, yet still they came on at a run, hurrahing, until they were almost up among the guns, and the gunners were leaving their pieces. The old Sergeant's voice speaking to his men was as steady as if on parade, and kept them down, and when the command was given to fire kneeling, they rose as one man, and poured a volley into the Germans' faces which sent them reeling back down the hill, leaving a broken line of dead and struggling men on the deadly crest. Just then a brigade officer came along. They heard him say, "That repulse may stop them." Then he gave some order in an undertone to the lieutenant in command of the batteries, and passed on. A moment later the fire from the Prussian batteries was heavier than before; the guns were being knocked to pieces. A piece of shell struck the Sergeant on the cheek, tearing away the flesh badly. He tore the sleeve from his shirt and tied it around his head with perfect unconcern. The fire of the Germans was still growing heavier; the smoke was too dense to see a great deal, but they were concentrating or were

A SOLDIER OF THE EMPIRE

coming closer. The lieutenant came back for a moment and spoke to the captain of the company, who, looking along the line, called the Sergeant, and ordered him to go back down the hill to where the road turned behind it, and tell General—— to send them a support instantly, as the batteries were knocked to pieces, and they could not hold the hill much longer. The announcement was astonishing to the old soldier; it had never occurred to him that as long as a man remained they could not hold the hill, and he was half-way down the slope before he took it in. He had brought his gun with him, and he clutched it convulsively as if he could withstand alone the whole Prussian army. “He might have taken a younger man to do his trotting,” he muttered to himself as he stalked along, not knowing that his wound had occasioned his selection. “Pierre——” but, no, Pierre must stay where he would have the opportunity to distinguish himself.

It was no holiday promenade that the old soldier was taking; for his path lay right across the track swept by the German batteries, and the whole distance was strewn with dead, killed as they had advanced in the morning. But the old Sergeant got safely across. He found the

BRED IN THE BONE

General with one or two members of his staff sitting on horseback in the road near the park gate, receiving and answering dispatches. He delivered his message.

“Go back and tell him he *must* hold it,” was the reply. “Upon it depends the fate of the day; perhaps of France. Or wait, you are wounded; I will send some one else; you go to the rear.” And he gave the order to one of his staff, who saluted and dashed off on his horse. “Hold it for France,” he called after him.

The words were heard perfectly clear even above the din of battle which was steadily increasing all along the line, and they stirred the old soldier like a trumpet. No rear for him! He turned and pushed back up the hill at a run. The road had somewhat changed since he left, but he marked it not; shot and shell were ploughing across his path more thickly, but he did not heed them; in his ears rang the words—“For France.” They came like an echo from the past; it was the same cry he had heard at Waterloo, when the soldiers of France that summer day had died for France and the emperor, with a cheer on their lips. “For France”: the words were consecrated; the emperor himself had used them. He had heard

A SOLDIER OF THE EMPIRE

him, and would have died then; should he not die now for her! Was it not glorious to die for France, and have men say that he had fought for her when a babe, and had died for her when an old man!

With these thoughts was mingled the thought of Pierre—Pierre also would die for France! They would save her or die together; and he pressed his hand with a proud caress over the cross on his breast. It was the emblem of glory.

He was almost back with his men now; he knew it by the roar, but the smoke hid everything. Just then it shifted a little. As it did so, he saw a man steal out of the dim line and start towards him at a run. He had on the uniform of his regiment. His cap was pulled over his eyes, and he saw him deliberately fling away his gun. He was skulking. All the blood boiled up in the old soldier's veins. Desert!—not fight for France! Why did not Pierre shoot him! Just then the coward passed close to him, and the old man seized him with a grip of iron. The deserter, surprised, turned his face; it was pallid with terror and shame; but no more so than his captor's. It was Pierre.

“Pierre!” he gasped. “Good God! where are you going?”

BRED IN THE BONE

"I am sick," faltered the other.

"Come back," said the father sternly.

"I cannot," was the terrified answer.

"It is for France, Pierre," pleaded the old soldier.

"Oh! I cannot," moaned the young man, pulling away. There was a pause—the old man still holding on hesitatingly, then,—“Dastard!” he hissed, flinging his son from him with indescribable scorn.

Pierre, free once more, was slinking off with averted face, when a new idea seized his father, and his face grew grim as stone. Cocking his musket, he flung it up, took careful and deliberate aim at his son's retreating figure, and brought his finger slowly down upon the trigger. But, before he could fire, a shell exploded directly in the line of his aim, and when the smoke blew off, Pierre had disappeared. The Sergeant lowered his piece, gazed curiously down the hill, and then hurried to the spot where the shell had burst. A mangled form marked the place. The coward had in the very act of flight met the death he dreaded. Pierre lay dead on his face, shot in the back. The back of his head was shattered by a fragment of shell. The countenance of the living

' A SOLDIER OF THE EMPIRE '

man was more pallid than that of the dead. No word escaped him, except that refrain, "For France, for France," which he repeated mechanically.

Although this had occupied but a few minutes, momentous changes had taken place on the ridge above. The sound of the battle had somewhat altered, and with the roar of artillery were mingled now the continuous rattle of the musketry and the shouts and cheers of the contending troops. The fierce onslaught of the Prussians had broken the line somewhere beyond the batteries, and the French were being borne back. Almost immediately the slope was filled with retreating men hurrying back in the demoralization of panic. All order was lost. It was a rout. The soldiers of his own regiment began to rush by the spot where the old Sergeant stood above his son's body. Recognizing him, some of his comrades seized his arm and attempted to hurry him along; but with a fierce exclamation the old soldier shook them off, and raising his voice so that he was heard even above the tumult of the rout, he shouted, "Are ye all cowards? Rally for France—For France—."

They tried to bear him along; the officers,

BRED IN THE BONE

they said, were dead; the Prussians had captured the guns, and had broken the whole line. But it was no use; still he shouted that rallying cry, For France, for France, "Vive la France; Vive l'Empereur"; and steadied by the war-cry, and accustomed to obey an officer, the men around him fell instinctively into something like order, and for an instant the rout was arrested. The fight was renewed over Pierre's dead body. As they had, however, truly said, the Prussians were too strong for them. They had carried the line and were now pouring down the hill by thousands in the ardor of hot pursuit, the line on either side of the hill was swept away, and whilst the gallant little band about the old soldier still stood and fought desperately, they were soon surrounded. There was no thought of quarter; none was asked, none was given. Cries, curses, cheers, shots, blows, were mingled together, and clear above all rang the old soldier's war-cry, For France, for France, "Vive la France, Vive l'Empereur." It was the refrain from an older and bloodier field. He thought he was at Waterloo.

Mad with excitement, the men took up the cry, and fought like tigers; but the issue could not be doubtful.

Man after man fell, shot or clubbed down,

A SOLDIER OF THE EMPIRE

with the cry "For France" on his lips, and his comrades, standing astride his body, fought with bayonets and clubbed muskets till they too fell in turn. Almost the last one was the old Sergeant. Wounded to death, and bleeding from numberless gashes, he still fought, shouting his battle-cry, "For France," till his musket was hurled spinning from his shattered hand, and staggering senseless back, a dozen bayonets were driven into his breast, crushing out forever the brave spirit of the soldier of the empire.

It was best, for France was lost.

A few hours later the Quarter was in mourning over the terrible defeat.

That night a group of Prussian officers going over the field with lanterns looking after their wounded, stopped near a spot remarkable even on that bloody slope for the heaps of dead of both armies literally piled upon each other.

"It was just here," said one, "that they got reinforcements and made that splendid rally."

A second, looking at the body of an old French sergeant lying amidst heaps of slain, with his face to the sky, said simply as he saw his scars:

"There died a brave soldier."

BRED IN THE BONE

Another, older than the first, bending closer to count the bayonet wounds, caught the gleam of something in the light of the lantern, and stooping to examine a broken cross of the Legion on the dead man's breast, said reverently:

“He was a *soldier of the empire.*”

